

PETER C. PETERSEN: REMINISCENCES OF MY WORK IN NEVADA LABOR, POLITICS, POST OFFICE AND GAMING CONTROL

Interviewee: Peter C. Petersen

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Description

The life of Peter C. Petersen constitutes an American and Nevada success story. Born in Denmark, circa 1898, he immigrated to the United States in 1915 and arrived in Nevada in 1919. Petersen has had a full career working as a baker (his original trade), being active in union affairs, and serving as president of the State Federation of Labor, deputy collector in the Internal Revenue office, on the Nevada Industrial Commission, head of the Reno Post Office, and member of the Nevada Gaming Commission. From the 1930s to the 1950s he was a close political ally of Senator Patrick A. McCarran.

Petersen was an immigrant who understood the problems of other immigrants. One gains the impression that immigration was one area in which he had his disagreements with McCarran, though his criticism of the senator on this point is muted. Although his own path as an immigrant was not unduly harsh, he is sympathetic with the problems of the newly arrived. In the post office he had considerable contact with registering aliens, encouraging them to become citizens, subsequently helping to build up the McCarran political organization.

Peter Petersen gives a valuable glimpse of the handicaps under which labor worked in the 1930s. He was president of the State Federation of Labor during part of that difficult decade, and he describes well the hard times which unions experienced. His description of how labor helped elect, and keep in office, Senator McCarran will also be of value to future scholars.

Petersen claims to have been one of the few who could really get along with McCarran. He gives valuable information on the relationship between McCarran and Pittman, why McCarran did not support William S. Boyle for United States District Attorney, how McCarran had achieved preeminence in the Nevada Democratic Party by 1940, and why the hotel owners in Las Vegas boycotted the *Las Vegas Sun*. Many of McCarran's attitudes were shared by Petersen, and he was not unproud of being called the senator's "hatchet man." Thus, Petersen writes off both Thomas Mechling and Hank Greenspun as opportunistic carpetbaggers to the state.

Since Petersen was head of the Reno Post Office for some twenty years (he received the job as a political plum from McCarran), he provides information as to the complications of running the agency in a period of unprecedented community growth, and through war and rising deficit. He candidly discusses the sagging morale of postal workers, as their wages steadily fell behind the rising cost of living.

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An Oral History Conducted by Mary Ellen Glass

University of Nevada Oral History Program

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PREFACE TO THE DIGITAL EDITION

Established in 1964, the University of Nevada Oral History Program (UNOHP) explores the remembered past through rigorous oral history interviewing, creating a record for present and future researchers. The program's collection of primary source oral histories is an important body of information about significant events, people, places, and activities in twentieth and twenty-first century Nevada and the West.

The UNOHP wishes to make the information in its oral histories accessible to a broad range of patrons. To achieve this goal, its transcripts must speak with an intelligible voice. However, no type font contains symbols for physical gestures and vocal modulations which are integral parts of verbal communication. When human speech is represented in print, stripped of these signals, the result can be a morass of seemingly tangled syntax and incomplete sentences—totally verbatim transcripts sometimes verge on incoherence. Therefore, this transcript has been lightly edited.

While taking great pains not to alter meaning in any way, the editor may have removed false starts, redundancies, and the “uhs,” “ahs,” and other noises with which speech is often liberally sprinkled; compressed some passages which, in unaltered form, misrepresent the chronicler's meaning; and relocated some material to place information in its intended context. Laughter is represented with [laughter] at the end of a sentence in which it occurs, and ellipses are used to indicate that a statement has been interrupted or is incomplete...or that there is a pause for dramatic effect.

As with all of our oral histories, while we can vouch for the authenticity of the interviews in the UNOHP collection, we advise readers to keep in mind that these are remembered pasts, and we do not claim that the recollections are entirely free of error. We can state, however, that the transcripts accurately reflect the oral history recordings on which they were based. Accordingly, each transcript should be approached with the

same prudence that the intelligent reader exercises when consulting government records, newspaper accounts, diaries, and other sources of historical information. All statements made here constitute the remembrance or opinions of the individuals who were interviewed, and not the opinions of the UNOHP.

In order to standardize the design of all UNOHP transcripts for the online database, most have been reformatted, a process that was completed in 2012. This document may therefore differ in appearance and pagination from earlier printed versions. Rather than compile entirely new indexes for each volume, the UNOHP has made each transcript fully searchable electronically. If a previous version of this volume existed, its original index has been appended to this document for reference only. A link to the entire catalog can be found online at <http://oralhistory.unr.edu/>.

For more information on the UNOHP or any of its publications, please contact the University of Nevada Oral History Program at Mail Stop 0324, University of Nevada, Reno, NV, 89557-0324 or by calling 775/784-6932.

Alicia Barber
Director, UNOHP
July 2012

INTRODUCTION

Peter C. Petersen is a native of Denmark, born in 1893. His careers as a baker, soldier, postmaster, and political figure in Nevada are subjects for his memoir. Professor Jerome Edwards's introduction outlines and evaluates Petersen's considerable contribution to Nevada life.

When invited to participate in the Oral History Project of the University of Nevada, Reno, Library, Mr. Petersen accepted graciously. Throughout the three recording sessions, all held at his home in Reno, he was an interesting and careful chronicler of his story. Apparently enjoying the experience of recounting some of the events of a busy life, he answered questions and added anecdotes good humoredly. The result is a document which, as Professor Edwards points out, will be useful to scholars researching in Nevada labor and political history.

The Oral History Project of the University of Nevada, Reno, Library preserves the past and the present for future research by tape recording the reminiscences of persons who have been important to the development of

Nevada and the West. Scripts resulting from the interviews are deposited in the special collections departments of the University Libraries at Reno and Las Vegas. Mr. Petersen has generously assigned his literary rights to the University of Nevada, Reno, and has designated his oral history as open for research.

Mary Ellen Glass
University of Nevada, Reno
1970

SPECIAL INTRODUCTION

The life of Peter C. Petersen constitutes an American and Nevada success story. Born in Denmark, he immigrated to the United States in 1915 and arrived in Nevada in 1919. Since that time Petersen has had a full career working as a baker (his original trade), being active in union affairs, and serving as President of the State Federation of Labor, deputy collector in the Internal Revenue office, on the Nevada Industrial Commission, head of the Reno Post Office, and member of the Nevada Gaining Commission. From the 1930's to the 1950's he was a close political ally of Senator Patrick A. McCarran.

This oral interview will be valuable to scholars in many respects. First, it is obviously of interest because Petersen himself is an immigrant and understands the problems of other immigrants. One gains the impression that immigration was one area he had his disagreements with McCarran, although his criticism of the Senator on this point is muted. Although his own path as an immigrant was not unduly harsh, he is sympathetic with the problems of the newly arrived. Not only had

he gone through the process himself, but in the post office he had considerable contact with registering aliens, encouraging them to become citizens, and thus helping to build up the McCarran political organization.

In the second place, the interview gives a valuable glimpse of the handicaps under which labor worked in the 1930's. Petersen was President of the State Federation of Labor during part of that difficult decade and he describes well the hard times which unions experienced. His description of how labor helped elect, and keep in office, Senator McCarran will also be of value to future scholars.

Not the least important part of this oral interview is the portrayal of McCarran himself. Petersen claims to have been one of the few who could really get along with the Senator. He gives valuable information on the relationship between McCarran and Pittman, why McCarran did not support William S. Boyle for United States District Attorney, how McCarran had achieved pre-eminence in the Nevada Democratic party by 1940, and

why the hotel owners in Las Vegas boycotted the *Las Vegas Sun*. Many of McCarran's attitudes were shared by Petersen, and he is not unproud of being called the Senator's "hatchet man." Thus, Petersen writes off both Thomas Mechling and Hank Greenspun as opportunistic carpetbaggers to the state.

Since Petersen was head of the Reno Post Office for some twenty years (he received the job as a political plum from McCarran), he provides information as to the complications of running the agency in a period of unprecedented community growth, and through war and rising deficit. He candidly discusses the sagging morale of postal workers, as their wages steadily fell behind the rising cost of living.

This is both a fascinating and useful interview. This writer's chief criticism is that Petersen chose not to speak at greater length. We would like to know more, for example, as to how this man rose in the state labor organization, and more as to his relationship with McCarran. Petersen closes his interview on a genial note, considering himself, having been born in a foreign country, and having done well in the United States, as "extremely lucky." He continues, "I can only say that this country has been good to me." One must add that in return his services were highly beneficial to the community.

Jerome Edwards
Associate Professor of History
University of Nevada, Reno
1970

EARLY LIFE

I was born in a small town in Denmark by the name of Thisted. And I grew up in Thisted, and I went to school in Thisted. My mother died when I was fifteen years of age, and my father when I was sixteen. That, of course, changed my whole life. Some of the things that I wanted to do I couldn't do because I had to take care of myself to some extent, although my father did leave enough money where I didn't have anything to worry about.

Of course the school system in Denmark is considerable different from the school system in this country. In the first place, the hours in schools in Denmark were eight hours a day, including Saturday. In other words, a kid goes to school for forty-eight hours a week, which, of course, changes the length of time that it's necessary for him to get an education.

After graduating from school, I went to work as an apprentice in a bakery. Inasmuch as my parents had passed away, I had to depend entirely on myself and the good will of the men, one of whom I was working [for] as an apprentice. After [I had] been working

about three years for him, he was called into the Army, and although I was only seventeen years of age, I was put in charge of the bakery and had some kids that was younger than I was to learn the bakery. Apparently, it worked out all right because at least the bakery was there when he come back.

I will tell about how this apprenticeship was put together. It's your father that signs up the apprenticeship, you know. When my father signed me up as an apprentice in this particular bakery, you sign an agreement where you have to work there for a period of four years. And you get a raise in pay for each year. In other words, the first year, you get 120 kroner; the next year 140 kroner; and from there on and out for the next two years, you get 160 kroner. But you do learn the business because you put in in the neighborhood of from twelve to fourteen hours a day of actual work in the bakery, and you learn it from one end to the other one, which, incidentally, was a great help to me when I came to this country.

It has always been my ambition to come to the United States. And after I had learned

my trade, I had sufficient money where I could pay my passage to come to this country. And I also helped a friend of mine to pay his fare. I came to this country and landed in New York City in the first part of September, in 1915. I went up to Fargo, North Dakota, where an uncle of mine had a large ranch holdings some miles outside of Fargo. I worked there for approximately four weeks and then went into Fargo and got myself a job in a bakery in that city; I had a trade when I came to this country, too.

For the first four or five years thereafter, I worked in various places in both North and South Dakota, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and then came out to Salt Lake City and worked in a little town by the name of Magna, where the copper mills and smelters were located.

In the later part of 1918, I joined the United States Army and was assigned to Camp Lewis, Washington.

Well, I didn't see a great deal of army service. I registered for the army service in Stillwater, Minnesota. And then I went to Salt Lake City, and had a transfer from Stillwater, Minnesota to Salt Lake City. And in the later part of 1918, I think it was September—. I wouldn't've had to go to the Army because I come from a neutral country. I decided that it would be a good thing for me to do, to get into the Army. And I asked the draft board to get me in the next quota, which they very politely did. And I went up to Camp Lewis, and, of course, got into what they called then the depot brigade, which was the starting point of your military service. And about a week or so after I got up to Camp Lewis, I was politely transferred down to the school for bakers and cooks because they had hardly about eight or nine bakers in the whole camp. So I was in the school for bakers and cooks up to May the thirty-first, 1919. And that's the extent of my military career.

But on the other hand, it's the smartest thing I ever did. Because first of all, I got my citizenship in Camp Lewis after [having] been in this country two and a half years. And in many other ways, it's been a remarkable good thing down the line, so this [was] one of the few smart things that I did.

What sort of things did I do in this school for bakers and cooks? Just to give you an idea, we had something like three hundred men in that school for bakers and cooks at one time or another. And we had one group we were teaching field service to. That means baking in the field with equipment that they will have under conditions when they were actually in the war zone. And a company had one hundred and two men in one big [group]. I think there was fifteen ovens in a unit, I remember that. And there was fifteen sergeants, a sergeant in charge of everything. The rest of them, I don't remember. But the majority of it, of course, was done inside. And we used a carload of flour, which was something a little better than 600 sacks—100-pound sacks—and half a car load of substitute. You know, everybody had to use substitute for bread. So that came up to around a thousand 100-pound bags of flour we made into bread every day to feed them. And one thing that always used to puzzle me is that the boys that had to load the bread into the wagons for the various companies had to wear white gloves. But maybe the wagons had been used the day before to haul manure in, or other things. But that's the way it worked.

When I was discharged from the Army, I went back to Salt Lake City, and made Salt Lake City more or less the starting point for various jobs. I had jobs up in Idaho. And from Salt Lake City, twice I came in to Nevada. But for Reno, I came from San Francisco to Reno.

What kinds of experiences did I have on these various jobs? Well, of course, of

you learn your trade over in a European country, you are an all-around man. You can handle bread, and you can handle—of course, pumpernickel is a great item over there, and you can handle, say, rolls of any description—hard rolls, soft rolls, Danish pastry, puff pastry. And you also [have] what you call a “conditer” over there (that) you can make fancy decoration [with] and so on and so forth. But, of course, when you come to this country then, then you would start to get into—you’re either a cake baker, or you are a bread baker. Except when I worked for the Sanitary Bakery (now Welsh’s Bakery), we had a Swede that was dough mixer, and we had a Russian that was a cake baker; and he was one of the best cake bakers I ever seen in my life, but he was an alcoholic.

Now, there was a general thing that they would call up— one of them would call up—and say they couldn’t come to work. But once in a while, they would both call up, they couldn’t come to work. And I was the only one that could take their place. Then we speak about the Russian, I could take his place up to a certain point, but he was really good. So you had to pretty well be real good. It isn’t like it is now. I could go down to Welsh’s Bakery, and if I had four bakers—however many he has there, that’s all I’ll need, take the rest off the street and teach them in a few days. Just like America, you can pretty well make America [laughing] in a very short period of time if you get an intelligent boy to work with.

I came in to Elko in the fall of 1919, but I actually was there in 1920. I can tell you exact. It was September, 1919, that I come in because they had the Elko County Fair and rodeo. You know, they had a huge rodeo in Elko in those days. And the reason I come into Elko, I was actually working up in Weiser, Idaho. But I had a friend that was working as a baker. And he wrote and told me that he

needed another man, and he would like to have me come. It’s true he needed another man, but only for about two or three weeks. But somehow or another, I managed to stay there. So he decided to leave. And I worked there all during 1920. I worked in the bakery in the daytime and worked in a—well, you could call [it] a bar, although they didn’t serve any liquor there. They sold, you know, “near beer, as they call soft drinks and things like that. In the evening I worked there. There isn’t much to do in Elko, so that worked out pretty good.

Well, when you talk about September of 1919, of course, the country just went dry. The manufacturing of bootleg whiskey was a sort of a half-known factor. Nobody knew too much about it. But they were out in the boondocks up in there alongside the Humboldt River. There was stills in various places. And liquor was sold at the rate of sixty dollars a gallon. But there was never any shortage of liquor that I remember.

There were some famous bootleggers up there. Uh, yes. There were some of them—in fact, you know—you have heard about a fellow by the name of White that was gassed down here in Carson City, one of the first they gassed? You know, he was gassed because he killed a—or supposed to’ve killed a Greek. They never found the body. They found part of it. They were fighting over moonshine whiskey. They were down in there operating in the neighborhood of Deeth. But you could get whiskey in pretty near any place downtown in Elko. And also gambling. Gambling stuck out; there was nobody that was trying to hide it too much. In fact, I’m sure that Sheriff Harris knew pretty near where every still was. Didn’t do too much effort to knock it over.

We are all smart enough that we knew that there was many of ’em that made a little money doing [that]. You know—and Kirkley,

see, and—what was his name? Hillhouse. They couldn't help themselves because all you had to do was go down in Douglas Alley [in Reno] and pretty near every place down in there was a bootlegging joint. And that wasn't too difficult.

Graham and McKay, you know, they had the biggest one down there, which is now part of Harold's Club. And incidentally, this made Mr. Bill Graham pretty mad at his partner, Jim McKay, or rather Scarface Sullivan, because Scarface Sullivan gave up that lease. And, of course, that wasn't very smart on his part, but he did. Then, of course, they operated the Willows out there, which was quite a place. It was a very nice place. In fact, a lot of those drapes and stuff we used in the Democratic Labor Club, we got from Bill Graham that had been used out there, at the Willows.

And you know this—and it's true, that when the banks closed, Wingfield found himself without any cash and had to go down to Graham and McKay to get some cash money from them. They were the only ones, pretty near, to have any cash money. And he borrowed \$2,000 from 'em in cash. Whether it's true or not, that's the story.

And, of course, there was another thing. You know, Wingfield never signed a lease with anyone. And in all the time Graham and McKay and Scarface Sullivan had the Bank Club, they never had a lease. And that's how they wound up with the hotel. Because somebody had talked Wingfield into selling. And this somebody was Norman Biltz, incidentally. And Bill Graham was in San Francisco when he found out that they was up for sale, and he had to come back in here and buy the building in order to protect himself.

LABOR UNION ACTIVITIES

Labor unions have a way of handling the membership where you can't just move into any city you want to if there's already enough of the labor craft in that particular city. And how they handle it is that you join a union. Like for instance, we will say in San Francisco, the Bakers Union is No. 24; the Bakers Union in Reno is 161. you are a member of Local Union 24, and you want to come up to Reno to go to work. If Reno already has enough bakers out of work, they will not accept your traveling card. In other words, in order for you to travel from one union to another one, you must have a traveling card. And the union [in] which you want to be a member must accept your card before you can anticipate to find any work in that city. And in that way, the unions regulate their membership so they take care of those guys [that] actually had resided in the city for a long period of time. And that's it.

After [I'd been] discharged from the army and worked in Salt Lake City, I went into Elko, Nevada, and worked there for a period of about a year and a half. Elko, Nevada at that time was a complete open city. It was

predominantly a ranching community, and always some of the ranch hands would come in to Elko and celebrate. That could happen pretty near any day in the week.

When I first come to Elko, this country had just gone dry, and liquor was sold in Elko at sixty dollars a gallon. But there seemed to be plenty of people willing to pay that price for it. I left Elko for San Francisco and went back to Salt Lake City, and then went to McGill, Nevada. McGill, Nevada, of course, is the community town for the Consolidated Utah Copper Company. And everything in the community—homes and everything—belongs to the copper company. I was fairly lucky, because not working for the copper company, there was no way for them to charge me for the room. So I lived rent-free for over a year in McGill. You had to have a baker, you know.

I left McGill for San Francisco and was hired to come to Reno, Nevada as a baker by the Purity French Bakery. I got the job through an employment agency that everybody would know; Murray and Ready is the name of it.

We went down—and Reagan Street, I think it was. I worked in the Purity Bakery for a short period of time and then went to work in other bakeries, and continued to work in bakeries up to the year 1933.

Shortly after arriving in Reno, I was elected the secretary of the Bakers and Confectionery Workers Union, and we managed to sign the first union agreement with the various owners of bakeries in the city of Reno. And Reno was considered at that time to be a good union city. The wages received in Reno was higher than any place on the West Coast.

In the summer of 1932, I was elected president of the State Federation of Labor. And as things were tough, a lot of people were out of work, and 1932 was an election year. There was a lot of the union boys that was pretty anxious to elect a new administration in Washington. In amongst the labor boys that was out of work in that period of time—from 1931 and all the way through 1932 and part of 1933—we had approximately 1,000 union members living in flophouses which were located (1) where the Greyhound Bus depot is now, (2) at the Palace Club, and (3) in the Fulton Alley. It was quite a chore to see that those boys got anything to eat, and their diet consisted mainly of coffee and stale doughnuts.

During the so-called Depression days in 1931, '32, and '33, the membership of the various unions in Reno, Nevada, of course, wanted changes in many other ways besides politics. And, of course, when politics creeps into the labor movements, then you find two factions—one a Republican faction, and the other one a Democratic faction. And I became part of the Democratic faction. And as most of the members that we had in the flophouses belonged to the Democratic party—for what reason, I'm not in a position to say [laughing]—and inasmuch that I was one that was seeing that they at least—they got some

stale bread and doughnuts to eat, I became fairly popular with some of the membership.

So when convention time came along, I was asked to run for president [of the] State Federation of Labor. And by counting the various unions I knew would be for me, I knew that I could win the election. And then, of course, I decided to run for president and was elected.

Being an official in the labor movement in those days was quite some difference from what it is today. Remember, you had to do the fighting yourself, all the way down the line. With those you work for, you had no labor acts of any kind, no Wagner labor laws, no unemployment insurance, or any other of the many benefits that labor has today. If you went out and started a fight for the labor boys in those days, it could very easily wind up with you without a job in just a few days. Incidentally, that happened twice to myself while employed in the various baker[ie]s in Reno. Therefore, of course, it's understandable that labor was very much interested in a change in Washington. Thinking that there was almost a cinch for them to improve their conditions as it was impossible to make it any worse than they actually were.

Before my term expired as president, I had already gone to work in the Internal Revenue office. And then, of course, I only took a limited amount of time in the labor circles. And as things got a little bit better, the labor convention from 1934 was held in Ely, Nevada, and I, of course, couldn't run any more, and a new man was elected. But for many years, I still took an interest in the labor movements.

Will I tell about how I lost these jobs because of my union activity? Well, I'd just as soon not because [a] couple of 'em are my friends now.

Well, in the labor movement in those days, you signed an agreement with management.

That, of course, was a great step forward. But we signed a lot of agreements in the unions which was just purely and simply some writing on a piece of paper. And the eight-hour work day didn't mean a thing because nobody ever was paid overtime, or at least very few were. And that in particular was a very interesting thing for me, when, in 1935, I went to work for the Nevada Industrial Commission. It was part of my job to check on the payrolls of the various business firms throughout the state of Nevada. And I found an awful lot of business houses in this community and state who was certainly far from paying the workers what the union scale called for. But things were tough, and labor had nobody to fight for them. And therefore, in most instances, he had to take it.

Well, of course, in the labor movement, you had certain ones just like there is today. There was the leaders in the things and they had to do their work. You had here in the state of Nevada a fellow by the name of Joe Clinedinst, a fellow by the name of George Townsend, and a fellow by the name of Bill Burns, and a fellow by the name of Nelligan—I don't know his first name—and many like that, that was the whole labor movement. And, of course, they had to do all the fighting; and the others, they would just be members who paid their dues. And that's how it worked.

You see, there was an easy thing on the union meetings to get up and just raise hell. But there was an entirely different matter to raise hell the next day when you had to actually raise the hell with the guy you were working for. That's the way it worked. And we were trying to educate people where the simple fact, to encourage them to buy the goods with the union label on.

We was used to have an organizer in the Bakers Union that worked from San

Francisco. And he made a statement one time that I never forgot. He said, "The easiest thing in the world is to get somebody out on a strike. But the hardest thing in the world is to get *that* fellow back to work." And there's an awful lot of truth, or there were, at least, in those days.

Now, you got to remember, when you got fired for those reasons, they never gave that as a reason, you know. They would always find some other reason why you been laid off. Now, it was a strange thing with me because I had been the foreman for five years in each one of the two bakeries before I was fired. So I was reasonably sure, the reason for it.

You hear so much about yellow-dog contracts, but I never had any dealings with anything like that. That was mostly in large concerns, you know, and we never had any big concerns around Reno that I remember in those days. The Nevada Pack was about the biggest one of the plants.

You had two groups of unions in the labor movement; what you call the trades-craft and the miscellaneous unions. The building trades-crafts, of course, is carpenters, bricklayers, and plasterers, and plumbers, and the electricians, and so on, all the mechanics. The miscellaneous unions is bakers and barbers, bartenders, culinary workers, and similar unions like that. And, of course, the idea of it was that you were all members of the Nevada State Federation of Labor and the trades Council, the Trades and Labor Council. And, of course, if they had any trouble, you were supposed to take it up with them, which we did. But we were not any better off than you were because their man just wasn't going to put his neck out too much, either. You know, when you got a family, you've got to sort of watch out for them a little bit.

What did they do besides just fire me from my job? Did they blacklist me? No. In

fact, with one of them, later on, during the war, the beginning of the war, I got his son into Annapolis through Senator McCarran. Senator McCarran never figured that out, how I would recommend a kid whose father had fired me some years previous. But that's an actual fact.

Did the State Federation of Labor then have a lobbying organization? Didn't have any money. When I took over as president of the State Federation of Labor, most of the unions had their money in Wingfield's bank. The only one that didn't have their money in the Wingfield bank was the Bakers Union. So when you don't have any money of any kind, you can't get around anywhere and there's very little you can do. And [in] particular when you got a couple of thousand people there that's out of work and living in places where they just barely exist. You know, there's one thing in this country. It's extremely one way or another. It's a possibility [that] it's the other way now.

[Joe] Clinedinst wanted to be appointed labor commissioner, and he thought that he had Mat Murphy and Gray Mashburn on his side. But Gray Mashburn was on the fence. And Kirman definitely did not want him. And so out of it came purely and simply that I got the job as traveling auditor for the Industrial Commission, and he didn't get the job for Labor Commissioner. And I went to Gray Mashburn and told him, I says, "Just forget about me for traveling auditor for the Industrial Commission. You give him the job as Labor Commissioner."

And then Mashburn told me, said that he wasn't too anxious to get him, so what're you going to do? This did kind of make a little cool feeling between me and Mr. Clinedinst? Oh, there's no doubt about that. There's no doubt about that. You see, the Labor Club [Democratic Labor Club], Clinedinst didn't do any work. You know, he had a heart condition

anyway and couldn't do any work. So he fooled around a lot about politics. And then he wanted to start the Labor Club, but you got to remember, he couldn't start a labor club unless he had me, because I was the president of the State Federation of Labor; and you can't start a labor club unless he goes along with you. We started a labor club, and we made all the prearrangements, and we elected Pat McCarran, there's no doubt about that, because we carried Washoe County for him. Some things pay that nobody had ever expected to pay. It's true that a bank helped us. [Laughing] But, of course, those things will come out.

Well, you take all the unions—there was some unions in Las Vegas, but not very many. Of course, Boulder Dam had just begun, and there was a few unions that sprang up. But frankly, I don't know too much about the labor conditions in Las Vegas because, you know, the unions didn't have any money, and very seldom you traveled on your own expense, and particularly if you don't have too much money yourself. So there was no reason except at convention time to meet with the union boys, say, from Clark County or from White Pine.

But in White Pine County, of course, everything there was theirs; they worked in the Consolidated Copper mines. And you had sheet metal workers and blacksmiths and miners, and so on and so forth. All together, they may have seven or eight unions.

But the [Reno] union temple, at that time—now, where would it be? It's either over the Nevada Club, or over Harrah's, one of the two buildings; frankly, I can't remember. But that was the union upstairs. I think it's where Harrah's club is now. And the only union at that time that was big enough to have a full paid business agent was the Culinary Workers' union. And they had one-half of that upstairs part of it as their permanent

headquarters. And in the front half, they had the bootlegging joint [laughing], run by somebody of the Culinary Workers' union. In fact, some of the lady members (there wasn't too many of them) was very, very upset over it. It didn't seem to bother the men so much. So many of the unions, they, of course, had secretaries which—then the secretary and business agent were one and the same person, and he'd get paid somewhere from twenty dollars to maybe up to as high as seventy-five dollars for taking care of the books, and so on and so forth. And that's pretty underpaid.

Then during the time when I was president of the State Federation of Labor, that's when they had the big Culinary Workers' strike. If I remember correctly, there were six restaurants involved in it. And after they had gone along a very short time, they decided that they would set up a committee of three from the unions and three from business, and those six would meet to pick three others, so there would be a membership of nine on that committee. One from the businessmen that was on there was Al Caton, you know, that had the Reno Press Brick. And Brewster Adams was another one, I remember. And I was on for labor, one of them. George Townsend was on for labor. And a fellow by the name of Anderson that was a plasterer. Those was the laboring boys.

One day when we had a meeting, Caton said to me, going out from the meeting, he says, "Don't you think, Peter, that it's time that we get together and get this damn thing settled?" And I thought that was a wonderful idea. So we thrashed it out, and agreed on what we would recommend for salary, which was identically what the Culinary Workers union had asked for, save and except one thing, and that was the busboys and dishwashers. We had set the price for them at fifty cents less than the union one. And we frankly thought we had done a pretty good job.

We went up into the meeting, gave them what we had agreed to, were turned down cold. And the strike lasted for a good many months from then on. And when they settled it, they got a good deal less than we could've settled it for, three and four months before. That's unions. And from then on, I was very reluctant to serve on any committees. We even had it in the agreement with all of those that had stayed on to work, "scabs," as they called them, would be put out of work, and when they settled it, of course, none went out of work. That just shows you how stupid union people are sometimes.

Do I think that strike was the one that settled the attitudes here in Reno? Well, yes and no. I wouldn't say that Reno was an anti-union [town]. Reno was composed of people who, if people gave them a reasonable argument, they're pretty easy to get along with. I never had any trouble with them. Of course, you'll always find some people say they're against anything. But there was a good many places where you had to be a member of a union, or you just didn't work. All the building trades was one hundred percent union. But you know, you don't make strong unions when you have a depression going on. Because I know what the union scales used to be—that was general for mechanics—about ten dollars a day. But you'll be surprised how many books that I've seen when I got into the Industrial Commission. They didn't get anywhere close to ten dollars.

Did I work on union organizing? In some places, we done a little bit. But you see, you are at a point where there wasn't anything you could do. Nobody had any money. Banks were going broke, and the little bit of money they had was tied up. So there wasn't too much activity. Naturally, when we could, we helped. I remember we helped the Teamsters union; we helped other unions. But our biggest

problem in those days was to find enough work for them so they could eat. That's how bad it was.

I mentioned flophouses; I would like to tell some more about that. Well, I don't even remember now how we got the— where the Greyhound is, there was an empty building. And whoever the owners were (and I couldn't tell you who the owners were because I don't know) just gave it to us. That's all there was to it. And it was up to the fellows and us. But [Hugh] Red Rauhut and myself furnished them. When I say myself and Red Rauhut, it was actually the ones we were working for. I was working for the Purity French Bakery and got them [baked] food. And that's what they lived on. And then we got them some fishing poles. And there was a few of them that was pretty good fishermen, so they got a little fish. And we used to buy some Chase and Sanborn's coffee which was handled by the Fleischmann yeast company. What they called dated coffee, we could get that for twenty-five cents a pound after it had been on the shelf. So indeed, we got all of it they had. So those fellows lived on just coffee and doughnuts. Except one group, now that you want to find out. We got the upstairs of the Palace Club which had been a gambling place operated by Scarface Sullivan. And when Sullivan and the Bank Club consolidated, went in together, that was empty. And Graham, Bill Graham, gave us that place with the understanding that we had to have one fellow in charge on a twenty-four-hour basis, to have full charge of it. On top of that, he bought all the fuel—coal— that we needed. He bought all the blankets there was room for, and gave to us. And he bought numerous—hundreds of hams and bacon for them up there. So they were sort of living on the fat of the land, as things were in those days. But Bill Graham done a tremendous amount of good for them. He never [wanted it known]. There's nobody that knows about that piece of

ground he gave to the Catholic church for their playground; he gave it to them.

When the people would come to get a place in these flophouses, they came to the various unions they belonged to. And we had designated somebody in all flophouses that was in charge of it. And, of course, all of them done a remarkable good job, because they had to depend on them. And they knew that if they didn't run it right, there was a good possibility that it would be closed up. So we had very little difficulty. But in all of them, we had a man for a twenty-four-hour basis. See, [an] eight-hour shift to each one. They had a standing agreement—or we had told them—that whenever they had any room, and even if they had to crowd them sometimes, to put them in. And sometimes, we didn't have cots. We got most of the cots from the National Guard. But we didn't have anything. It was much easier to sleep on the floor than they were going around town in the cold. So we didn't ever have any trouble with that. But, of course, the upstairs were the best ones, the ones in the Palace Club. There's no argument with that. Of course, very few people know that didn't have anything to do with it. And that's a good many years ago now.

Then, of course, the banks started to liquidate and people got a little bit of their money back now and then. Of course, things progressed considerable.

Well, the Democratic Labor Club was—Clinedinst had the idea. Now, I'm not saying this is true, but I believe it, because he didn't ever work. And there was four or five other old timers, and they wanted a place to hang around downtown, I think, more than anything else. I'm not saying that as a fact. But the first place they had, they rented an office and they paid thirty dollars a month over the Cal Neva Club, you know. And later on, when they got a little [bigger] they got a room over

in the E. C. Lyons building, you know. And from then on, it branched out. And he got the idea, and he spearheaded it. And, of course, he was made president.

And I can remember when I was on the board of directors. And then the election came along, and it was a good idea, and Clinedinst promoted a little money for it. So, of course, there was more and more people that would come up in there. You know, there was no place to go here. And Joe Clinedinst was a promoter, there's no argument with that. And the only thing that I'd seen sometimes, that he went a little bit too far. And, of course, out of that was the big split amongst labor, which to a great extent was politics because there was the Republicans and Democrats; that's really what it [was].

But he was also very close to Bill Woodburn, Sr. And Woodburn, Sr., would give him some money from time to time to do a little political work. Not much money, but a little. So we started that Labor Club, and as I said, it was a good place because nobody had any place to go. And pretty near every time we had a meeting or a rally or somebody to speak (we had Pat McCarran or Jim Scrugham or any of 'em), we could always depend on that hall being full. And we just moved the cots out in the back. And then they could move them back in after the meeting was over. It worked out pretty good.

When we went down to the convention [in Las Vegas], of course, all of those that went to the convention was also members of the Democratic Labor Club. And we managed to get over that resolution, I'm pretty sure. I mentioned that about Pat McCarran. We got real active. And the club had, I would say, roughly three hundred members or more, which was quite a lot. And the wife [Mrs. Petersen] was just as enthusiastic about it as anybody else, so that was a pretty powerful

setup. So between that one and the banks, we done a pretty good job for Senator McCarran. There's no argument with that. And we kept it alive. It was alive in the 1934 campaign. But I think that was the last of it. I don't think that it lasted [past] that.

But we had such a fellow—well, you take—oh, what was his name? He became surveyor general. He was a painter by trade. He got elected practically with the help of the club. And Dan Franks, if they hadn't been for the Labor Club, I doubt very much [if] he would have been elected state treasurer. And there's no doubt about it with Mat Murphy.

So during that period of time, they were listened to, and Clinedinst made out. The only trouble with Clinedinst—and, of course, that's hard for anybody to say—was his own fault. He wanted too much, see, and he made himself too many enemies, and they just fought like hell not to give him a job. Unfortunately, I guess he got the idea that I was the main guy. And I can't prove anything right now, but I told Mr. Mashburn and Mr. Murphy that I didn't want a job if it meant that Joe Clinedinst couldn't get one. I don't know of anything else I could['ve] done.

Kirman was against Clinedinst from the beginning. But Kirman was also against me. But that was about as far as I can see, fifty-fifty. Why was Kirman against me? Because somebody said I drank too much, to give it to you very plainly. But then, he done something else again. When I went into the post office and Dan Sullivan went down to see him about giving me a three months' leave of absence, and Kirman said to Sullivan, "You, under no circumstances, will fill Pete Petersen's job until such time that he'd been confirmed as Postmaster and asks you to do so because he's the best traveling auditor we've ever had. And I done him a great injustice because I listened to somebody." So that's my experience with Mr. Kirman.

POLITICAL AFFAIRS WITH THE McCARRAN ORGANIZATION

1932 TO 1938

But anyway, let's get down on our way to the Democratic convention in Las Vegas. This is in '32. I first met Senator McCarran on our way to the Democratic state convention in Las Vegas, Nevada in Beatty, Nevada. There both his car and the one I was driving in stopped for gasoline. He informed me in Beatty that he was going to try to get a resolution through at the convention in Las Vegas whereby the convention would recommend that Senator McCarran got no primary opposition, for the reason that the then Senator Oddie was considered to be from three to five thousand votes stronger than the Republican party. I was somewhat doubtful that it could be done, and incidentally, so was Senator McCarran. But we had nothing to lose, so we tried it at the convention. And the convention, they left it up to the delegation of Washoe County, stating that they would be willing to go along with anything that the county wanted. We met in caucus that night in the Apache Hotel with Bill Woodburn, Sr., chairman of the Washoe

delegation. After a good deal of discussion and disagreement and what have you, we finally agreed that we would recommend to the convention that they would go on record not to oppose Senator McCarran with any other primary candidate. Strange as it may seem, nobody thought that that could ever be done. And in fact, the chairman, Mr. Woodburn, stated that if anybody had told him prior to the caucus that he would go along with anything like that, he would've told them they were crazy.

Senator McCarran didn't have any money to speak of. But the Democratic party made a demand on him for a donation of \$5,000 to the state Democratic central committee. Senator McCarran raised the money through a loan from the Stack estate. It was put into Wingfield's bank, and two days afterwards, the banks closed. So Senator McCarran still didn't have any money.

The strange part of it was that the outcome of this was that in Senator McCarran's mind, there was some talk that the state chairman, Mr. William McKnight, knew that the banks

was going to close, and shouldn't have put the money in there knowing that fact. I doubt that to be—have any foundation whatsoever. But anyhow, what they did was to split the Democratic party just a little bit more than they had been before.

But the Democrats went ahead, and with the help of the Republican, George Wingfield—by letting the banks go broke—we won the election in 1932, electing both Pat McCarran for Senate and Jim Scrugham for congressman.

I had known about Pat McCarran for some time. I knew him to be a brilliant attorney and an excellent speaker. And being a Democrat, it wasn't too hard for me to be friendly with Senator McCarran and willing to help him in the election.

With Roosevelt running on the Democratic ticket and very, very popular with the laboring classes of people, there wasn't too much doubt about their electing the Democrats in that particular year. On the surface, the Democratic party was in harmony with each other, but underneath the surface, the leaders of the Democratic party—namely Pat McCarran and Key Pittman and the state chairman, William McKnight—were not getting along any too good. Finally, they made an agreement that Pittman was to have all of the bigger jobs, such as the Internal Revenue, Collector of the Internal Revenue, and the U. S. Marshal, and that Senator McCarran was to have the U. S. Attorney and the postmaster in Reno, plus many of the smaller jobs, as deputy collectors in the Internal Revenue office.

The deputy collectors were to be appointed from the ranks of labor for their assistance to Senator McCarran during the campaign. Unfortunately, there was very few of the laboring boys that had the necessary qualification to hold those jobs. But somehow or another, apparently I must've

had the qualifications because I was appointed [deputy collector of Internal Revenue]. And, of course, that it was an important job is for sure, in view of the fact that it paid \$127.50 a month.

But it was a terrific experience, and I seen a good many things in the state of Nevada at that time. Because first of all, when the country went wet, there was no alcohol tax division in this state. And enforcing and checking on saloons was given to the Internal Revenue office. And I was the first deputy collector to check them saloons in this state. And believe me, that's the kind of a job to get if you want some votes in an election.

In those days, the Internal Revenue office, of course, had to collect the usual taxes, income taxes, and corporate taxes, and was also to collect processing taxes, all new taxes which had been passed by Congress in 1933, such as taxes on hogs, tobacco, cotton, and many other things. And they were hard taxes to collect, because in many instances when you called on a farmer and told him that he owed a certain amount in taxes, he wanted to talk you into, "Take the pig instead of the money," which is an actually fact in many instances. They want you to take their small pig instead of paying the taxes.

During the period of time I worked in the Internal Revenue office, I met Senator McCarran from time to time. And politicians, today as well as then, get a lot of their information from calling on the various county courthouses throughout the state. And many of them take it for granted that they know just exactly what goes on in that county, which is unfortunately not true in many instances.

Inasmuch as I had a large territory, once in a while I went to courthouses, but most of the time got my information from farmers, [the] working class of the people. Sometimes

I got an entirely different line of information than the others did. And Senator McCarran, when we had meetings, was beginning to believe that I knew more about politics than some of the rest of them, which in many instances led him to come to me and ask for advice concerning the political affairs in certain counties.

While I worked in the Internal Revenue office, another deputy collector by the name of Mat Murphy, who was an oldtime mining man in the state of Nevada and had been a candidate for mining inspector two years previous, intended to again run for mining inspector in 1934. Mat Murphy had no money. He got some money from his friends for printing cards and small items like that. But he had no money to throw around the state. And for that reason, a great deal—in fact all—of the traveling he did was with me. And he, Mrs. Petersen, and myself started throughout the state. And that's the year that checking the saloons in particular paid off. Of course, Mat Murphy was elected *without spending hardly any money*, [he] never had to spend a dollar in any saloon wherever we went.

And it was the first time that they used loudspeakers in the hall. They were just coming in. And we put Sammy McCarran on a box so he could reach the mike. And then, he had memorized the speech that we wrote out for him, and he could stand up there and talk about Bullfrog, Rawhide, about any of the mining camps.

This was in regards to the mine inspector, Mat Murphy, that was elected mine inspector, you see. And he could do the same thing for his father. He memorized it, and then he really went to town. I guess Sam was about thirteen, fourteen years old.

He was a nice young man, nice boy. Very nice looking, too. But, oh, I think he (this is

just between us) got spoiled. He was spoiled. You see, in Washington, they can do things like these young fellows, and their fathers being senators and very prominent—. And, of course, they're spoiled. He got a little wild, and he would get in, be picked up for speeding or some other thing, and then he would say, "I'm Senator McCarran's son," and he was chairman of the District of Columbia, you know. And the cop wasn't going to have anything to do with anybody like that. But Sammy's a good boy. I liked him.

Did the other McCarran family members enter into campaigning? No; you see, both Margaret and Mercy was nuns, and they were in a position where they couldn't get free. Mrs. McCarran would travel with him, and she was good in meeting the social life of it, where the wife [entertains] the various people and so on. We traveled with them, with Senator and Mrs. McCarran, numerous times, many times. [My wife] liked Mrs. McCarran very much. [They] got along very nicely, always did. She was a very attractive woman when I first met her. Of course, like many other people, she had a temper; but then, you all have one. Boy, I didn't blame her sometimes. Anybody that is crazy enough to run for political office must be nuts [laughing], to tell you the truth.

After that election in '34, Mat Murphy and Gray Mashburn wanted me to take the job of traveling auditor for the Nevada Industrial Commission. And inasmuch as they paid a good deal more than being the Collector of the Internal Revenue office, I was more than willing to accept it.

Before I get into the Nevada Industrial Commission, though, I will tell a little bit more about the Internal Revenue. For example, how did McCarran's appointees get along with Pittman's appointees? Well, as far as I know, they got along all right. There's no doubt about it in some instances that the deputy collectors

that McCarran had appointed didn't get any choice assignments. But outside of that, Bob Douglass, the collector, was fair. There wasn't much he could do about it anyway. But we got along good as a whole,

We didn't have the kinds of conflicts that the two senators had between themselves? Well, not in the open. Of course, I could tell you a story.

When we checked on the saloons, they sent a fellow up here from San Francisco to break us in on it. And he and I went out, and Hawthorne was the first place that we stopped. And this fellow from San Francisco, he gave the fellow in the Hawthorne poolroom an unmerciful tongue-lashing for not having a [stamp]. And I didn't exactly like what he was doing. But in those days, the Revenue stamp was just put on them, and [in] this dry climate, they would curl up right off the bottle. There wasn't anything you could do about it. You couldn't fine them for it, at least, not in my opinion.

But after we got out, this fellow said to me, he says, "You didn't like the way I handled him in there." I says, "You could've handled [him] with a little bit more finesse."

And he says, "Do you know why you were selected to be the first one to go with me?"

And I says, "No, but it wasn't to do me a favor, I know that."

Well, he says he was scared of me. He thought there was political dynamite, and he figured this was a good way to "kill you off so he could give you the job" [laughing].

So even in those days, I had a reputation for being McCarran's "hatchet man?" No, I wouldn't say that in those days. That came in later. That came in after I been in the Industrial Commission for some time. Remember, we traveled a lot, and Mrs. Petersen went with me a lot, which was permissible. And you'd have to—doing politics in the Industrial

Commission, you can go about doing politics by just being a good fellow. You're dealing with labor, you're dealing with doctors, and you're dealing with businessmen. And remember, when I went out in there, I'd been in places where they would tell you, "You are the first man we've seen from the Industrial Commission in—all the way from six to eight years." Not *months*, six to eight *years*. Run up against that time and time again. And then you help 'em. And lots of times, we'd run up against cases where a fellow [had] been turned down for a claim, and he would have reams and reams in the files. And when you check up on it and find out, generally it was only something like seventy-five or eighty dollars difference in what *he* thought he should have and what he had been rated for in the Industrial Commission. And I. always said it wasn't worth our while to fight the small items like that. Because in the long run, they generally had to [have] a guy go down there three or four times to try to get it straightened out. So I straightened them out, and everybody was happy, including Dan Sullivan.

[Dan] Sullivan had been chairman, and he was reappointed chairman by Kirman. And Tannahill had been on the commission, and he was reappointed by Kirman. And Fitzgerald was a new appointee by Kirman. And Pete Petersen was a new appointment by Kirman.

In the Industrial Commission, you do a tremendous amount of traveling, and in particular, during the period I was with the Industrial Commission, because that was during the construction of the Boulder Dam. And we had to spend a considerable amount of time at the Boulder Darn besides the other work we had to do throughout the state.

Another thing, there was a good deal of mining activities in the state of Nevada in

those days to a great extent due to the fact that the price of gold had been raised from twenty to thirty-five dollars an ounce, which made a lot of people go out in the hills and try to develop mining claims and old mines who had been closed down and could be operated due to the difference between twenty and thirty-five dollars an ounce. But it all meant a lot of work for the Industrial Commission.

And for some unknown reason, they appointed a fellow down in the Boulder Dam [district], see. But the other fellow, [myself], the traveling auditor, he still had the whole state of Nevada and occasionally was called on to help the fellow in Boulder Dam.

When the construction of Boulder Dam began, there was a lot of people that figured that the Industrial Commission fund would go up in smoke. But Dan Sullivan, as chairman, did, in my opinion, a tremendous job in regulating the rates so when the Boulder Dam was through, the Nevada Industrial Commission found themselves with a surplus of better than \$200,000. On top of that, this was the beginning of the increase in population in Las Vegas and Clark County.

In those years, I think that the Industrial Commission got on its feet and got themselves in a position [so] that when business increased in the state of Nevada, they were capable of handling the bigger load in claims and [could] take care of the new laws which had been created for the benefit of working people. I was very much interested in the Nevada Industrial Commission because it was an organization that took care of the working people. The allotted benefits that working people had never had before were created in that short period of time.

But, of course, we were always looking towards doing Senator McCarran some good.

And we knew that the 1938 election would soon be around the corner. When Roosevelt made his recommendation for packing the Supreme Court, and Senator McCarran, with other senators, started to fight it, there were some of us that weren't so sure that the 1938 election would be a runaway. But it did happen that way, and Senator McCarran was with a large majority.

I liked the work in the Industrial Commission very much. And I never dreamt or believed it, but the Postmaster in Reno, Bill Kinnikin, passed away, and a new appointee had to be made. And while some of Senator McCarran's friends were giving him various names for postmaster, it didn't work out the way that the Senator wanted it, and he did not appoint any of them. But one Saturday morning in the later part of December [1936], I got a telephone call from the senator, and the conversation went something like this:

Senator McCarran: "How about the postmastership in Reno?"

I says, "It's too bad, and I'm sorry to see that Bill Kinnikin passed away."

Senator McCarran: "I'm not talking about Kinnikin. I'm talking about the new postmaster."

I says, "Would you mind to tell me who he is?"

He said, "You. I'm coming out to Reno in a few days and I'll talk to you about it." And that's how I was appointed postmaster.

Of course, in those days, a political job, why—. Take, say, when Roosevelt was elected, the Post Office Department got the cream of the crop. And the highest paid postmasters in those days was \$12,000, and that was the postmaster in New York and Chicago. And they had the best people that was possible. Not alone know how to run and take care of people, but also knew your politics. You don't get them now, that kind.

1938 TO 1944

Sometimes in the—the early part—well, I will say sometime in May of 1938, I think would be better, Senator McCarran and I was in Carson City on business. One that Pat McCarran wanted to see was Bob Allen, the highway engineer. And I didn't want to see Bob Allen. Somebody else I wanted to see was Henry Lee. (Incidentally, he's still alive; he's in his nineties.) He and I had worked together in the Industrial Commission. And I ran into Henry Lee on the street in Carson City. And he said, "Pete, I got some news that I'm sure that you'll be interested in." He says, "I was down at the gasoline service station down here on the street, and Mr. Lewis (you know, who was Kirman's partner in something. I can't remember Lewis's first name) told me that Kirman was definitely not going to run for governor, and that he would so announce later in the evening."

I says, "Are you sure, Henry, that he's not going to run?"

He says, "That's what Lewis says, and he showed me a copy of the announcement he was going to give to the papers."

I went down and got hold of Pat McCarran and told him the news. And we went into Reno and into my office and got Mr. Carville on the phone. He was up in the third floor. And we talked him into running for governor at that time. And, of course, he was like many others that were reluctant to go, didn't know whether they could be elected or not. We assured him that he could. And he came out for governor. And, of course, that was quite a campaign in '38 And Pat McCarran and Carville got along pretty good except in a few instances.

So in 1938, with Pat McCarran, you know they had the "court packing" bill going on in Washington. And McCarran was one of the

men that was spearheading the move against the court packing. And he didn't know exactly when he could come out here to campaign. And he asked me if I would open up the headquarters for him. So we got a place down on Second Street in the building, you know, where the drugstore is on the corner. I forget now. But that had been a dentist's office, and we got it rent-free. And we opened up the headquarters of Pat McCarran before he ever got up in there. We also helped Carville a little bit.

Why did Pat McCarran want Carville for governor? Well, Pat McCarran and Carville was very close friends. And Carville had a terrific reputation, you know. In fact, he had so much of a reputation that Pittman didn't dare oppose him when he—Pat McCarran—recommended him the first time. He, of course, removed him the second time. So everything was going along real good.

You know, Senator McCarran was not the easiest man to get along with. And for some unknown reason, I was about the only one that really could get along with him. And you'd be surprised how many times I been called out of bed at night to go down and quieten him up for one thing and another.

I never will forget one time Jim Scrugham and him got in an argument, about two, three o'clock in the morning. I had to go down and quieten them both down. But they really went after it sometimes. I don't mean maybe.

So after the campaign, why, there was beginning to—you had the feeling of a little dissension between them. And I found out that there was some of Carville's friends that was telling him that he was a bigger politician than Pat McCarran was because [laughing] he had got more votes than Pat McCarran had. So I got hold of Carville up there and got it straightened out. But when anything like that creeps into it, you can never straighten

it out. There is always that friction there. But one thing is for sure. If they hadn't broken up those two gentlemen—they didn't break up, but cooled off a little bit— they would have been the strongest political thing you've ever seen in this state. They had everything pretty near their way.

Then, of course—well, maybe we're getting ahead of ourselves. But, of course, the election of 1938 was not a tough election. Pat McCarran didn't have too much opposition to them. And about a month before the election, he gave us instructions— well, I wouldn't say instructions, but asked us—to concentrate entirely on Ted Carville, because he was sure that he had the election in his bag, which we did; we got it.

So after Carville was in there and you began to hear about the friction between the two of them, I talked to Carville, and one of the things Carville says to me, "Don't you think that I know my friends?"

"Oh," I says, "I'm sure that you know your friends, Ted. But do you know who your friends hang around with? That's the thing I'm worried about right now."

"Well," he says, "you don't have to worry about it because I'm going to appoint a committee of three."

And I says, "Well, who is going to be the three?"

"Well," he says, "I haven't got them picked yet except one."

I says, "And who is he?"

He says, "You." And he says, "nobody is going to get a job with the state of Nevada unless that you say he's the right kind of a guy." Well, of course, those things, that's just talk. But anyway—.

But then, you get down to (Key) Pittman, there you've got it again. I don't think that it was so much Pittman and Pat McCarran; they weren't friends or anything like that.

But I don't think that the friction was near as bad if they had been left alone. I think that it was Pittman's friends that was nagging Key on. It's understandable that if they can keep them apart, they don't have to worry so much, you know. If they—Pittman and Pat McCarran—was friends, you know, they might agree on certain things, and some of them wouldn't have as fat a job as they had. Those things happen.

But anyway, poor Pittman died [in 1940]. And he wasn't put in ice in the bathtub or anything like that. He just up and died. It's a wonder he didn't die before.

Well, I'll tell you one more thing. Going back to the funeral of Key Pittman, you know, sometimes you get a laugh, too, even in funerals. Dutch Horton—I don't know whether you know Dutch Horton, a attorney over in Ely. He had been working, you know, for Pat McCarran. And he was working, I guess, for the state at that time. I'm not sure. Yeh, he must've been working for Carville; he was working then. But anyway, Pat McCarran asked him—he and I—to meet the train up in Lovelock—I'm pretty sure it was Lovelock. (Now, you see, there's where the trouble came in. I can't remember. But it's either Imlay or Lovelock.) And behind the train were all the senators, I think ten or twelve or fourteen of 'em. Well, Dutch Horton knew them all because, you know, he had worked with Pat McCarran back in Washington. But anyway, we were following them in as an escort, had all the reservations made for them at the Riverside Hotel and got them over there. And Mrs. Pittman was standing in the Riverside, and, of course, they had to pay their respect to her and one thing or another.

But in amongst the senators was Senator Green from Rhode Island. And he's quite a character, see, little fellow. And we took them over to the Riverside, and they had quite a

few drinks. And then, they went and paid their respects to Mrs. Pittman, and then they participated in the funeral, and then they had some more drinks, and then they had dinner. That's just about the way it were.

But this is how Green explained Key Pittman's funeral: He says, "It's the most jolly affair I ever attended. Some gentlemen, friends of Senator McCarran, met our train up on the line, and escorted us into Reno. And then we had some drinks, and then we had some food, and then we had some more drinks." He says, "I have never attended such a jolly funeral in all my life." And that's pretty near word for word how he described it.

So, at that particular time, Senator McCarran had the gout. And he and Carville were to—after the funeral—get together and select a man. And I drove him to Carson City every—well, it was for quite a while; it was pretty near every day. And I don't know how many names was mentioned for Key Pittman's job. But Jim Scrugham was one of the first that was eliminated, which was for a reasonable cause, that if they appointed him, we would've had to have a special election for congressman. And then they mentioned Thatcher, and they mentioned Woodburn, and they mentioned Ed Clark, and they mentioned, oh, hell, dozens of others.

One day, after about eight or nine or ten trips down there, and getting nowhere, I said to Pat McCarran, "Are you ever given the idea that maybe Ted Carville wants that job himself?"

"Oh," Pat McCarran says, "I don't think so."

"Well," I says, "would you have any objection if I spring it on him tomorrow?"

And he says, "No."

So I sprung it on Ted Carville, and that's it. That's what he wanted. And Mrs. Carville was in Washington on a Catholic affair at

that particular time. And it was agreed that Ted Carville was going to call her up that night and find out what she thought about it. And next day, when we seen him, his face was pretty long, so I know that Mrs. Carville didn't think much about it. Now, I can't go into the reason why Mrs. Carville didn't want to go to Washington, but there was quite a few reasons, apparently.

So then we was right back to scratch again. And I'm the one that sprung Berkeley Bunker's name. And Carville's secretary, Alice Maher, The says, "Well, we need a speaker of the Assembly."

And I says, "We need a senator a hell of a lot more right now than we do a speaker of the Assembly." And that's where Bunker come in.

So the night we met in the mansion to announce that Bunker was going to be it, Carville was so nervous that he couldn't write it himself. Pat McCarran dictated the announcement to Eva Adams, who was present at that time. I kind of felt sorry for Ted. But, of course, Ted Carville was a wonderful guy in many ways. And, of course, he managed to get in there anyway in the last two years of the six, and that's certainly something.

So going home that night, the roads between here and Carson City was terrible icy that night. First thing Senator McCarran said to me, "Now, we got to find a good secretary for Berkeley Bunker."

I says, "Well, who do you have in mind?" "Well," he says, "I have in mind somebody that'll keep me advised of what goes on in his office."

I says, "Be pretty hard to find."

So we mentioned again hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of names, and when we got into Steamboat Springs, in or around there, he says to me, "But I promised the job to Florine Maher." That was Alice Maher's

brother's wife. Bill, of course, got killed in the mine.

"Well," I said, "what the hell are you sitting, asking me for who to make secretary when you already picked one?"

"Well," he says, "I think she would be the best one. She will keep me posted. And she'll keep Eva Adams posted."

I says, "I doubt that very much." I says, "I've never seen anybody that got a job of that kind that isn't going to be pretty fairly loyal to the fellow that they work for. And second," I says, "I don't know whether Florine Maher and Eva Adams is that close. I'll take *that* with a grain of salt, too."

And, of course, it wasn't very long before there wasn't too much harmony between the two groups.

And then when Berkeley Bunker, of course, came up for election two years afterwards [in 1942], Jim Scrugham filed against him. And here, lo and behold, as soon as that happened, I got a telephone call from Pat McCarran telling me, said that he was going to support Jim Scrugham with everything he had.

Well, that meant a few changes that I had to do in a hurry, but we did. And Jim Scrugham's followers got a little overconfident. And I told 'em, "You guys better be on your toes because it don't look too good for Jim Scrugham around the state. In here in Reno, it looks pretty good." And that's exactly the majority he won with, was what he had [in Washoe County]. So then, of course, poor Scrugham, he passed away, and then Carville got to be United States Senator.

And then, as you know—well, you should know all about politics—Berkeley Bunker decided to run against Ted Carville. And then Mr. McCarran was for Bunker, strange as that it may seem. And I told him, "you're crazy." But nevertheless, that's what it were.

And you know what happened to Berkeley Bunker. People consider him an ingrate and all of that. And that was it.

But incidentally, with Pittman removing Ted Carville from United States District Attorney, I think is the stupidest political thing I ever seen. Carville had already gone by on his term, so he was sitting as United States District Attorney without a term. Mrs. Petersen and I was going back to see her folks in Illinois. And he knew we were going, so he come down and he says, "What should I do now if they decide to remove me while you're gone?"

"Well," I says, "I don't think there's very much that you can do, Ted, if that happened. But," I says, "I can't conceive the idea that they will let you go at this time. With Harley [A.] Harmon in the picture for governor, and then open it up so you can be a candidate? That I don't think. I think at least he should be much smarter politically than doing anything like that." But by God, he did! And if they hadn't done that, Harley Harmon would have been governor, not Ted Carville. But that's exactly what happened.

Then, of course, now we might as well follow that, being as much as we're there. Then came the appointment of a new United States District Attorney. And, of course, Key Pittman recommended Bill Boyle for United States Attorney. Pat McCarran wouldn't go for him, for Bill. That, incidentally, was something that happened between the women of the McCarran and Carville group. Just what it is all about, I don't know, but I do know that much. So I said to Pat McCarran one day in the office, "Are you so overly anxious to buck Bill Boyle?" Bill Boyle and I was fairly good friends.

And he says, "No, really, I'm not. But," he says, "I'm going to have to do it under the circumstances."

“Well,” I says, “couldn’t we figure out something that we could work out, maybe, that you wouldn’t have to do that?”

“Well,” he says, “I’ll tell you what I’ll do. If you can get word to Bill Boyle that if he will come down and see you and say that he has absolutely nothing against me and will support me and all this, I’ll go for him.”

I thought it was going to be a cinch. nut, by God, sill Boyle wouldn’t do it! Something in the Catholic church. Just what it was, I do not know.

Who else was active with me? Who did I work with in these campaigns? Well [laughing], it was fairly easy, because most of them, of course, were close friends of Pat McCarran. Many of them had political jobs. Many of them, we had done favors to. And I had done favors for an awful lot of people, foreigners because they had confidence in me, and they came around.

Now, remember that during the war, second World War, we had to register all the aliens. And the Post Office did the work. And it was set up to this extent, due to the manpower conditions and hours, that I had done at least ninety percent of the fingerprinting myself. And we registered something in the neighborhood of about 6,000 foreigners here in Reno.

Foreigners are funny people. See, they’re pretty bashful when they come over here. Many of them can’t speak English. And I have a pretty fair idea what it is to come to this country and don’t understand English. It isn’t exactly the most pleasant thing that you can get up against. It’s a pretty tough racket. For a good, long time, I lived on ham and eggs and liver and onions, but they’re the only things I could ask for. And that gets to be a tough diet.

So we could get a lot of them to help us. And you’d be surprised at how some of those—at least in those days, and I’m pretty

reasonably sure it was the same as it is now—if you can get the right fellow, he can handle an awful lot of foreigners. So you have a nucleus, but you got to have your key man.

So we formed another organization. And we called that the “Oak-we-no.” That’s supposed to mean in Indian, “you’re my friend.” Now I don’t even know how you spell it. And then we had all kinds of people. The Post Office employees, you know, don’t—can’t—play politics. But there isn’t anything to say that they can’t belong to the Oak-we-no, any more than anything else. And then, you see, you get many of the United States District Attorneys; you have certain ones that you’ve got into the Internal Revenue Office; and you got some in the Marshal’s office; and you got some in this, that, and the other thing. And pretty soon, you have yourself fifty, sixty key men.

But where you really do your business, you get the registration list down at the county courthouse. And in every precinct, you know some people. So you get hold of them, and you know you can trust them and you make them captains in that precinct. And so you get enough delegates when you go to the county convention, see, that you have enough. Now, I couldn’t go to county conventions or the state conventions. But they always held them in the State Building. And I was over in the Post Office, and Mrs. Petersen was always a delegate, and she’s pretty good at that. She says she just attended meetings like any other woman does, and that’s about all, but as I stated during our conversation in the political setup and attending political conventions, Mrs. Petersen was the one that had to do the work because her husband was not allowed to do politics. So she has been, actually, the politician in our family. Well, she was pretty good at it, real good in some of it. It’s been pretty interesting on that.

One year, a fellow by the name of Tom Salter, who was an attorney up in Winnemucca, and they referred to him as “Judge” Tom Salter (and he was a judge at one time, but at that time he was an attorney), he had been selected as temporary chairman. And there was little difficulties over there every so often. We always used a fellow by the name of Cliff Devine; he was the main guy. He would come over and find out what should be done. So the convention lasted a little bit longer than the normal [one] did, and this is when Tom Salter got up and said—when the convention [ended], he says, “I regret that I had to hold you people here as long as I did. But, you know, there was a few things that happened that we had to get straightened out. It took us a little time to get across the street and get our information from Pete Petersen over there.” Pretty raw, but that’s what [laughing]—that’s what he did. Oh, you can do a pretty fair job if you got the right people, and then, when you are taking care of them and you help them.

There’s been an awful lot of people that I helped in this country. I don’t know how many people I got American citizenship to, people that would never have been an American citizen any other way because they’re scared, today, to go. And actually, all they require a foreigner to do is that he go to school in the evening, at least try to learn. That’s all. That’s all it takes with asking. But a foreigner, he don’t know that. That really is a way to build up a political organization.

You have to keep track of the registration list. Of course, to start it off, in particular, now, with the increase in population, you know, it’s a little bit tougher now than they were then. But you get the first one and you keep them, it don’t take much to keep it up to snuff. You just get to know hundreds and hundreds of people.

Just to give you an illustration, when they buried Pat McCarran, the day of the funeral, Silas Ross came to me, and he says, “Pete, you better get started on collecting money to build a sarcophagus for Pat McCarran.” He says, “You know what happened with Key Pittman when he passed away and all the difficulties that they had in getting the money and the length of time it took,” which, of course, was a good many years.

I went over to the office that day and went through the lists of names with him, and I wrote a letter to a hundred and twenty people, I figured, to each give a hundred dollars. And we asked straight out for a hundred dollars. Within four days, we had every dollar we had asked for collected, see—\$14,000, just like that. Just by taking fellows that you knew was friends of his, and people that he had done favors for and people—and many of them was Republicans.

Is this the way we raised money for the campaigns, too? Well, you do that a little bit different. There’s always people like that to—in a position where they give up in the thousands, you know. But with their collecting [for] the campaigns when—I never had anything to do with collecting money for a campaign. Just collecting people, and seeing that—. When I say I didn’t collect the money, I had contact with those that did it, yes. Like in the 1944 convention, Norman Biltz was the financial man in that campaign, and I ran the rest of it.

Well, now, you take with Pat McCarran. You undoubtedly heard about the tremendous organization he had. He had a good organization, but not near as good as some people thought he did. And to be frank with you, there have been many times that I looked for some of those people that were supposed to be [good] and had a little difficulty in finding them, see. But he had certain ones all the time that’ll be right “Johnny-on-the-spot,”

Now, his way of doing politics was that he wanted to have control of the county organizations and the state organizations. And we pretty near know before this election, or the delegates to the state Convention, who was going to be elected. And we went into state conventions all the way down the line, and we knew just *exactly* where we were at. And, of course, for quite a few years, up to about 1938, 1940, we were always on the short stick. Mr. Pittman and his gang had it. But, of course, there comes a day, you know. And in 1940 was the big day, although they didn't lick us in '38, either. But in 1940, we had that convention damn near [laughing] four to one. And I'll never [laughing] forget it. Bob Douglass of the Internal Revenue office, he come in, and he says, "Pete, let us not have any arguments this time. Let's get together. You take fifty percent of the delegates to the state convention, and we will take the other fifty percent."

And I says, "Well," I says, "I know your job. You're supposed to know all about figures. But," I says, "you know, I can figure a little bit myself. And when you say it's fifty-fifty, you're a little bit off. And [laughing] you're going to be lucky to get anything." But it was pitched in such a way that I was the one in 1940 that had to make Key Pittman a delegate to the national convention, not his forces. Carville didn't want him. And [laughing] I couldn't blame Carville. And I [laughing]—I says, "Oh, Jesus Christ," I says, "we can't take the senior senator; he's up for election going in there, and not make him a delegate. No, I can't go for that. Pat McCarran won't go for it either." But Carville, he was ready [laughing] to say, "We have the votes." There's no argument to that. That's the time when Pat McCarran Went against Roosevelt, you know, and Nevada voted for Jim Farley. That, of course, was one of the strong points, was 1940.

In the election of 1944, the one where Vail Pittman ran against the Senator in the primary, you see, there, you had the same splits that have always been in the Democratic party, maybe a little bit more. And Senator McCarran, he had some powerful friends, but he also had some powerful enemies. And the enemies that year organized pretty good and had it all set. And when we got into the Democratic convention (it was held in Reno that particular year), the McCarran forces never had more than [a] seven- to eight-vote majority in that convention. And Mrs. Petersen, see, because she handled the women's group, had a great deal of trouble. Because, you know, when you only have a seven-vote majority, or eight, there can't be too many of the women go out of the convention. You have to hold 'em there. And that's the way it stayed, from the beginning to the end of the convention, seven to eight votes.

And incidentally, Roger Foley, the United States federal judge, now retired, but is still sitting on the bench on many occasions, got his appointment as judge for the simple reason that Senator McCarran said he supported him in that convention. That's how Foley was appointed federal judge.

Who were the powerful enemies besides Mr. Pittman? Well, you had quite a few of them from throughout the country, and particularly from Clark County. Clark County was beginning to come up and was feeling their oats and wanted to get more recognition than they thought that they had gotten. And they had a fight in their county convention down there amongst themselves. And apparently, they made some sort of compromise down there in the selection of the delegates to the state convention. I don't know if there was anyone particularly. [It was] so long ago. I know of one fellow I can

remember, Hap Hazard, [who] was one of them. But there could have been—well, there were many others, of course. But I don't recall their names now. That's a long time.

Well, his friends stayed with him all the way through. Even the Woodburns became his friends before it was all over (of course, not in '44 because they were for Pittman in '44). But McCarran had people like—in Lovelock, he had certain groups he could call on all the time. The same thing in Winnemucca. He had Mrs. Avery Stitser, you know, that ran the newspaper; and Roy Pierson there was county recorder or something there (he was a county official, anyway); Dan Shovelin in Battle Mountain; Red Ellis in Elko; C. E. "Dutch" Horton in Ely, and so on and so forth.

But, of course, the biggest trouble in 1944 was that bill he introduced, you know, about the public domain, you know, and that the sportsmen in the state of Nevada thought was more or less introduced against them. And they fought him pretty good. And you know, the sportsmen is pretty well organized in this state. That had a big bearing on it. Oh, yes, he made up with them, later. He made a statement to me one day when I asked him why he had introduced such a bill. "Well," he says, "I'll tell you, Pete. Before I get through with them, I'll make 'em understand that I'm right and they're wrong. And then we'll be even with them."

"Well," I says, "what the hell, politically." I says, "We'll end up with what we were before you started to introduce this bill, so we haven't gained anything." Some small things can be blown up, and some small things would be taken advantage of by the opposition.

But then, of course, after the primary in 1944, he had no trouble in the general election. And do you know who was the Republican candidate that year, '44? Molly Malone. So the general election, we had no

trouble there, and from then on out. He didn't have too much trouble in anything.

I told you before that '44 was the first time that the Biltz and Mueller crowd got into the Senator's campaign; what was their role there? Well, Johnny Mueller was one of the best politicians there were in this state. He just had a nose for politics. And when Johnny Mueller told you anything, you could pretty near depend on it, it was so—he didn't come around with any wrong information. Johnny Mueller had a host of friends, and influential friends. And Blitz, of course, knew so many people with money, and money is a very important thing in campaigns. So he was a sort of finance chairman. Only thing I know, whenever we needed any money, I would tell him how much we needed, and he would come up with it. Then, you see, we didn't pay anything for office rent or anything like that. They all helped, you know. And then we had the precincts from then on thoroughly organized. We found out in '44 that that was very important.

But in the primary election in '44, there was an amusing thing, but I'm not going to mention names now. See, [the] Vail Pittman forces had their headquarters over in the Golden Hotel. Senator McCarran had his headquarters in the E. C. Lyons building, which at that time belonged to Norman Biltz and associates.

Pittman's friends had a big celebration over to the Golden Hotel when the returns first come in because it looked very much like Mr. Pittman was going to win. In fact, they called me up. I was a little bit leery. I wasn't afraid that we wasn't going to win, but I knew it was going to be pretty slim. So I wasn't too anxious to get down to the headquarters in the early stages. But they called me because they all figured that by the returns, that there wasn't very much of a chance for Senator McCarran

to be reelected. And then when I told 'em to call certain county chairman and other leaders in various parts of the state, we got a brighter picture. And after we had verified that, about thirty minutes—and in particular, the way the votes was cast because he was leading in Clark County every time we had a report. And I knew that he was going to be elected, and apparently Pittman's men knew that he was going to be elected, too, because they left his party over there and come over to Senator McCarran's party. They actually had a chance to attend two parties that primary.

What part did the southern group play in winning Clark County that year? Well, Al Cahlan in particular—I don't know if Cliff Jones done too much. Senator McCarran wasn't overly fond of Cliff Jones. [Marion] Hicks, you know, that was in the Thunderbird, he was the one that handled Cliff Jones. And Hicks was the one that done all the organizing down in there. He and—oh, what's his name, now; he died here a couple of years ago, this partner in the Four Queens towards the last; can't think of his name. But they were actually the ones that— and Ed Clark did a lot of campaigning. In fact, Ed Clark, he made a statement that [if] anybody ever told him that he would make a door-to-door canvass for Pat McCarran, he would've told [him] he was crazy. But he did.

Well, they didn't want Pittman because— not saying anything against Pittman and not them having any animosity—they figured that he wasn't near as capable for taking care of things, and particularly anything that involved Clark County. You must remember that there they had Basic Magnesium plant standing down in there, and there was just an awful lot of people that wanted to demolish that thing. And if it hadn't been for Senator McCarran, that's exactly what would have happened. And they knew that, and after all,

that was part of their bread and butter. It was Pat McCarran that saved that.

What sort of an opponent did Molly Malone make that year? Well, Molly Malone, he had a lot of nice qualities. But to a certain extent, he was a sort of lightweight. And he could never, it seems like, get himself a head start before he got that break.

I mentioned a few minutes ago that Mr. Biltz was the finance chairman. Do I know what were the sources of the money, what the relationship was there with the gamblers and the utilities and the banks and so forth? No. As far as I know, Biltz never told anybody who he collected from. Of course, naturally, you know that he got a certain amount of money from [E. L.] Cord. He got some from various gamblers, too. But I never asked him; it was none of my business where he got the money from. But he got it from a lot of Republicans, incidentally. There's no doubt about that.

Did I ever have to be involved in money raising? Oh, I had raised money. In fact, it's a funny thing. I raised money in Clark County. But that was purely and simple because a fellow that I know real good went along and helped us collect the money from the boys out on the Strip. How did I do that? Well, you just go in and tell them that you need some money and you would like to have them help. [That's] about all you can say. Of course, some of them you don't have to "sell" very heavily. They're easy. Others, you've got to do a little "sale promotion." But you got to remember, you know, that Senator McCarran, in those days, saved gambling down in Clark County, too. You know, this was the time when gambling didn't have too good a name, and they needed some help. So it wasn't too difficult. There wasn't too many of them, and they wasn't as powerful as they are now, and it didn't mean as much in taxes as it does now. You take now, when the gambling industry pays \$36 million in taxes, you know.

Did I try to raise money with other interests, like with the utilities and the banks? No, I never had anything to do, any special occasion. Somebody else [was] on it. I never did care much. Well, there's certain people that's cut out for that, so the idea is to use them for that purpose. Then you got others that's cut out for something else, try to use them where they fit in the best.

1946 TO 1954

Let's see, now, Molly Malone was elected first in 1946, isn't that right? In the Democratic primary in 1946, Carville had served two years as Senator, the last two years of Scrugham's term. When the primary came around, Berkeley Bunker decided to run, too, and Carville and Berkeley Bunker was in the primary. And Mr. Bunker won, with Senator McCarran's help. And, of course, it split the party in two, in a different way than it used to be with Pittman and McCarran. And, of course, Carville, to a great extent, played up the thing that Bunker was an ingrate because he had appointed Bunker when Pittman passed away. Of course, I always took that with a grain of salt because I knew how Bunker was elected, was picked, that Carville actually wanted it himself. And we finally wound up with Berkeley Bunker. So while even though he was an ingrate to a certain extent, it wasn't near as bad in my mind as it were in some other peoples' mind. But anyway, there was enough to beat Bunker.

Pat McCarran campaigned for Bunker. And Bunker was elected not by too much of a majority [2,528], but he was elected [in the primary]. And then Molly Malone came into the picture, and he got a tremendous support from Carville and Carville's friends. And that particular way was what carried the election. But outside [of that], there wasn't too much

noise in that particular campaign except that it got to be more of a—as I remember, I didn't pay too much attention to it, to be honest about it. But I do know that it split the Democratic party pretty good. And McCarran made himself some more enemies. Why he went for Berkeley Bunker, I don't know. That's some of the things that is hard to understand. He got Bunker appointed in '40. Senator McCarran went for Scrugham in '42, and then he goes back and supports Bunker again in 1946. And that's what he did. And these are the things that is hard to understand sometimes. But in that particular [election], I didn't take much part in it in that year at all.

Well, of course, in the 1950—well, we better cover that one, I guess. Well, in 1950, Graham and McKay had got their full pardon from the President, President Truman. And, of course, Senator McCarran was the one that got them the pardon. Well, I guess I might as well tell how that come about. Let's see, now, there's nobody that we could hurt.

Shortly before they got their pardon—this was sometimes in '46 or '47, I think it were, wasn't it? It was when Truman was there, anyway—I was in the Grand Cafe, or rather, the Grand Bar, and I overheard two ambitious attorneys discussing the possibility of getting a pardon for Graham and McKay, and at the same time mentioned the amount of money they could get to make such a thing possible. So I thought to myself, "Now, you two gentlemen can't get anybody a pardon unless you get Pat McCarran's help. And [I] see no reason why we shouldn't get the help from Pat McCarran instead of from you two gentlemen."

So I got Pat McCarran interested in it. He didn't want to go for it because he says the publicity would be bad.

I says, "That depends on how it is handled," and so on and so forth. "And I don't think it will be near as bad."

So we picked the ones that had to sign. And, of course, inasmuch as it was a mail fraud, the postmaster had to be one of them. And then we got Bishop Gorman. And then we got Judge Foley. And then we got the fellow that was Assistant Attorney General at the time they were convicted [McGrath] that later on became a Senator. And one or two others—and it shot right through. We had no difficulties, or rather, Senator McCarran had no difficulty, and they got their pardon. And nobody knew anything about it for *years* after that. That's how close that was kept. There was only those that had signed it and myself and two and three others that knew about it.

So, of course, Graham in particular was very friendly because he understood what it meant. And, of course, those people that knew Graham said they could overlook all of the things he had done because he was a terrific guy in any other way.

And so, of course, we got into 1950, and we established the headquarters up in the Golden Hotel. And, of course, undoubtedly, Graham and McKay, both of them also contributed, you see, in money; in fact, I know they did.

And by that time, Senator McCarran himself was a pretty powerful man. He was chairman of the judiciary committee, and he was ranking member on the appropriations committee. And I don't think there's any two more powerful committees in the Senate than those two. That shows you how smart Senator McCarran were because when he was elected in 1932, he went back to Washington and *talked them into* putting him on those two committees. He knew where the [influence was].

So in 1950, we ran in the primary against [George] Franklin, who is now a Republican and district attorney in Clark County. He was the fellow we—and he wasn't very hard to beat. But you've got to campaign just the same.

And then in the general election in 1950, I can't think of it right now [election against George Marshall].

But anyway, we didn't have trouble. And I guess everything died down and things was pretty smooth. The Democrats got along pretty good, and they had McCarran sitting back in Washington, and everything was just fine. In 1950, of course, he was stuck back in Washington, too. And I again opened the headquarters for him. And we had it in the Golden Hotel, and we got the rooms very reasonably from Bill Graham and Jim McKay. And Norman Biltz was the finance chairman—he was raising the money, and I was doing the organizing. I put Ben Maffi in to run the office. And we had trouble finding a secretary for Ben. But then my sister-in-law came up here from Los Angeles, and we made her work for about three or four weeks. Didn't pay her anything, but—[laughing] very little, but she thought that was the greatest thing she had ever seen. And we ran it. About two days before the primary, Eva Adams came back. He didn't come at all himself. And that's the year we won marbles and everything.

Speaking now of 1952, John DiGrazia of Wells's daughter got an appointment in Senator McCarran's office. And she met, apparently, Mechling in Washington and married him. Now, I'm not sure about that. Because the first thing I know about Mechling was when I heard his name that he was out campaigning. And there's no doubt in my mind that Bible thought he could just push him over like nobody's business. And while Bible was campaigning, he was only campaigning with some of his friends that he knew. And he would go up and sit in their office and chew the fat with 'em, and didn't see very many people. Anyway, we began to be a little bit worried about him. And Senator McCarran was coming in from Washington,

and he asked me and Mrs. Petersen to meet him in Elko, which we did. And he informed me that he was getting some pretty bad reports. And I agreed with him, that I heard some real bad ones myself. So we decided that he was going to get back to Reno whatever way he could, and Mrs. Petersen and I take it leisurely up on the road and stop in the various towns, which we did. And it didn't sound very good to us, what we heard. When we got back into Reno, I seen Bible and I told him, I says, "This is getting pretty close, and you better be doing some campaigning." He says, "I have been campaigning."

I says, "Yeh. But you been campaigning (and I mentioned the different places) where you been sittin'. You haven't been out seeing the people. There's no use in you calling [that campaigning]."

"Oh, yes," he insisted he had.

"Well," I says, "I'm just afraid that we're not going to make it. But after all, it's you, not me."

The night of the election, we were up at Norman Biltz's house, and the returns came in. And then finally came in one where Mechling was ahead about four hundred and some-odd votes. And Senator McCarran, he says, "Well, that don't amount to anything because when the votes come in from Clark County, they will more than offset that."

I says, "There's only one thing wrong with that."

He says, "What's that?"

I says, "The votes is already in from Clark County, and this is the total. There aren't goin' to be any more votes!" So Bible was defeated.

But then, of course, when that happened, Mr. Mechling called me up at the house and insisted that I make an appointment with Pat McCarran where he and Pat McCarran could get together and straighten things out amongst themselves. He says, "In fact," he says, "I demand it!"

I said, "You don't demand anything from me, my friend." I says, "And I wouldn't even attempt to tell the Senator about it because I know he wouldn't listen to me. And I don't ever go in for anything I think is impossible."

But then came the time when Senator McCarran had to decide on what he was going to do. And it took him quite a while, and he didn't exactly like what he did. But finally, he came in to see me. He had his offices up on either the second or third floor in the Post Office building at that time. And he says, "I don't think that I could possibly support Mechling after what he'd been saying about me in the primary." And you know that during the primary, he wasn't fighting Bible, he was fighting McCarran; it was McCarran all the time.

"Now," I says, "if you don't support Mechling, I don't exactly blame you. And [laughing] I want to tell you something. Whether you support him or not, I'm not going to support him. I don't think he belongs as a United States Senator from any state, leave alone Nevada."

So he says, "I have made out this announcement I intend to make over the radio." And he handed it to me. And that's when he outlined to the people of the state of Nevada his reasons for not supporting Mechling and urged the support for Molly Malone. And with the exception of making a few changes in what he had made up as his speech over the—well, there was no TV then—over the radio, why, that's the way it were.

And then we managed—what was it?—to beat Mechling by just 2,722. But on the other hand, that's the most surprising thing. That just goes to show—I don't think you could do it in the state of Nevada now. But with the population at that time, if a fellow devoted enough time and had a little gift of

gab, what you can talk people into do[ing] by just—meet them personally. Showing the personal contact with people is an important thing. And in my opinion, it was a hell of a good thing that Mechling never got elected United States Senator. He was just as tricky as they make 'em.

And the only part of the whole thing were, that the money he used was the money she [Mrs. Mechling] earned while she worked for Pat McCarran. But that's [laughing] a fact, plus what Johnny DiGrazia could give them.

Look what he could've done if he had been elected Senator. And a fellow that had the gall—and that's what he had, pure and simple gall—what he could have done, been a United States Senator, You know, after all, a Senator from Nevada, he has just as much to say as a Senator from New York. And if he knows how to use that power, he can be an awful hard fellow to do business with.

What did this situation do with the relationships between Senator Malone and Senator McCarran? Well, of course [laughing], Malone gives a little bit more friendly attitude towards McCarran. [Laughing] But the truth of the matter of it is that I don't think Pat—in fact, I know that Pat McCarran didn't think a great deal of Molly Malone. But that, of course, goes back to the olden days again when everybody knew him, sort of. I don't think he disliked Molly Malone, but he didn't think that Molly Malone had very much on the ball.

But he had his good points, too. And then, of course, he got to serve twelve years for it because the Democratic party was split up, so that's not too bad. And then Cannon came up and finally beat him.

And then came 1954. And Pat McCarran decided to take a rest. And then we had a lot of fun. Some people tried to get Russell to appoint various fellows, and, of course,

he came out and he appointed Brown. And then the Democratic state central committee met to choose a candidate for the Democrats, which turned out to be Alan Bible. And the Supreme Court or somebody come out with the decision that there had to be an election, that Russell couldn't appoint somebody for a two-year period. So we had an election between Brown and Alan Bible.

OTHER POLITICAL AFFAIRS

There are several questions that we probably should explore as far as the Senator is concerned. When he was in his later years and at the end of his career, he was regarded by some people as rather violently anti-labor. And yet, he began his career almost as violently pro-labor. Can I explain that? Well, if he was anti-labor towards the last, whoever says that is absolutely wrongly informed. Now, if we go into 1932, I don't think that Senator McCarran had taken a part either for or against labor at any particular time. Of course, when he got thrown in with the Democratic Labor Club and he realized how much good it had done him, he got friendly towards labor, And labor was friendly towards him. And whenever—for a good many years, when I was in the Post Office in the beginning, anything they wanted from Senator McCarran, they came down and discussed with me. And we got Senator McCarran interested. And when Senator McCarran found they met in my office many times, and he helped them out—it was the beginning of all those new laws, which the labor boys wasn't too familiar with, And they would get his help, and they would go back to Washington as the labor got money. And he was always for labor.

Now we will go into 1944. Well, before we get into that, we had something like forty some-odd letters of endorsement from

labor unions, international labor unions, the big boys. In the 1944 campaign, every international union, from Green and on down, came with letters, and we had the campaign headquarters just flooded with them. In fact, I might have a few of 'em here somewheres, and yet, I might've got rid of them.

And in the convention, the labor convention, in 1944, which was held in Ely—and I was over there as a delegate—the American Federation of Labor sent in at least six or seven guys to that convention to talk for Senator McCarran. Because it was well known that the Republican party was using certain ones in the labor movement in here to (because it was laid out for that) get that resolution through that they tried to get, to read Senator McCarran out of the Democratic party. And labor fought with us all the way down the line. We had them from the Teamsters Union; we had 'em, organizers from the American [Federation]. And if Senator McCarran had done one-fourth of what those letters said he had done, he must have been a hell of a labor man. So when anybody says that he was anti-labor, I don't think that they knew what they were talking about.

Remember that he had more flowers (the flowers mean everything to a funeral) from labor organizations that I ever see and ever think I'll see. And all these dealings that I know of—and many of 'em was done in the Post Office—with labor was one hundred percent. And I think that you could still talk to some of the labor leaders there are—well, about the only ones who—talk to the person in the State Federation of Labor, Lou Paley. Talk to the fellow that is the business agent of the bartenders, Brambila, in Las Vegas. I think they'll all tell you what he'd done for them.

He was attacked in the state *Labor News*, for example. Some of the labor unions,

because there's no doubt about it, that it became more a political issue than anything. [There were columns by Denver Dickerson in the state *Labor News* attacking McCarran.] Well, of course, Denver Dickerson's got a personal animosity against Pat McCarran, which later on Pat McCarran paid back by sending him over to Asia somewheres, and wound up in Guam, something like that. It was also Denver Dickerson that gave me the label of the "hatchet man" for Senator McCarran. I'm well aware of some of these things.

Do I know about the Senator's feelings about the Pyramid Lake Indians and the controversy there over settling the land claims? Well, of course, I guess it's well known to you that he was helping the three or four Italian settlers down in there on the lower Truckee River, the water rights against the Indians. And not knowing anything about water rights or land laws in here, his claim was that they had in fee simple—I think that's what they call it—had secured that land, and it rightfully belonged to them, except one little thing that they overlooked, which was the one that cost them the land: they was told to pay so much money into the land bureau, and they didn't do it. And that put them in areas where they quit paying for the land, and therefore, they forfeited it to the Indians.

But, of course, the whole thing came into it, that he couldn't see a particular reason that they couldn't allow those Italians to pay that money because the Indians wouldn't do anything with the land if they did get it. And all you've got to do is drive down where that land is, and you will find out that that's correct, all the way through.

And, of course, maybe we'll never get the Indian votes. [Laughing] I don't think he ever got any from Nixon, that I can remember. Maybe a few, but it didn't seem to affect the

[laughing] Indians in any place else in the state, so—.

Did Senator McCarran ever talk to me about political power, about the use of power and how you get it? Not that I can remember. Of course, I guess that power can be understood, I'd say, that you lay out your plans to win. You got to win before you can get any power. Senator McCarran approached it where in order to be a successful campaigner, you got to have three people: One of those three have to know his politics from one end to the other one; and the other two have to know conditions of the state and what the state needs in general and so on, be his advisors. And whenever those three would happen to agree on a certain thing, how it should be carried out, that's the way it's going to be. And there was going to be no changes unless the four [agree]. And in my opinion, that was his biggest strength. He had six or seven of us. And he never done anything *real* important before it had been discussed *at least* with some of the five or six and been agreed to. And everybody knew that, so they worked pretty good as a team.

And he had another thing, too. Supposing a fellow had been Senator McCarran's enemy and done everything that he could against Senator McCarran, and then he had a son that was growing up, and got to be a man himself. If he wanted a favor and he'd been a nice fellow, he wasn't a bit bashful for granting that fellow [a favor], irrespective of what his father had been. Although, even sometimes with that, he couldn't understand certain things, see, like—I'll give you an illustration.

He come in here to Reno and he told me, said that the young fellow that I had recommended for Annapolis was a real fine young man and was doing real good where he was at. And he wanted to find out how long I'd known that young fellow.

Says, "I've known him since he was born." I says, "I used to work for his father. And incidentally, his father fired me."

He says, "You mean to tell me that a fellow fired you and then he comes down and asks you to recommend his son for appointment at Annapolis, and you recommended him?"

"Well," I says, "the fellow is a nice fellow, and I like him as a person. And he can't help what his father does, so why should we hold it against him?"

"Well," he says, "I guess that's a good way to do it." And the fellow is young [George] Siri that has the cold storage down here, meat market. But that's the way he functioned.

You know, Alan Bible, when he went back to Washington, he actually went back to Washington, was supposed to get an appointment from Pittman. And they stalled him along back in Washington, and then he wandered into Pat McCarran's office, and Pat McCarran gave him an appointment. So in that way, Alan Bible became the first young attorney to be educated in Pat McCarran's office.

[The Senator had a reputation for being pretty vindictive.] Well, of course, I heard that, but I've never seen any evidence of it. of course, he must've been a remarkable man, because there was always somebody saying he didn't pay his bills, which, to some extent, I think is true, but certainly not toward the last, by a long shot. And he was this and he was that. He was hanging around out here, to the Willows, when he should be out better, see—all of the things I heard about him.

Did I know anything about the famous boycott of the *Las Vegas Sun* and his relationship there with Hank Greenspun? Yeh. I think I do. Well, you know, when Greenspun opened that particular paper, he started to pick on Senator McCarran right from the beginning in his—what was it called,

that column? “Where I Stand,” which I believe to some extent was because of Al Cahlan and the other newspaper around there was for Senator McCarran. He couldn’t very well be for Senator McCarran, so he started, but he got to be personally affected. And it hurt the Senator. I think that perhaps hurt the Senator more than anything I can recall. And not to say anything about Eva Adams; she didn’t like it at all. And I don’t think that he liked it. And I think the ones out on the Strip didn’t like it, neither, because he were in a precarious position, you know, and they were afraid that gambling would be closed up any time, and they didn’t want anything to say that.

But anyway, one of their meetings down there, they agreed to pull all of their ads out of the Sun. And when they come back—no, it wasn’t Senator McCarran that told them to [do that] —but when they come back from Clark County and told me that, I says, “I think you made a mistake.” I says, “I think the idea of it is good, and I’d’ve done the same thing. But,” I says, “I’d’ve taken ’em one at a time—space it over a period, not just pull ’em all out like you did, because I think that you can get yourself in trouble. I don’t know too much about that law, but I think that you can.”

And, of course, Greenspun isn’t a millionaire for nothing, you know. He’s cold blooded, and he handles the truth pretty careless sometimes. I think he has mellowed down a little bit now.

So, of course, he started it, and an offer came that he pay him so much money, which was paid by the gambling operators down in there. Each put in their share to get him to drop that lawsuit. I don’t know exactly how much money, but it was over \$100,000. Well, on the other hand, if they had dropped [their ads] over a period of, say, six or seven weeks, they would’ve got the same results. And nobody could do anything, see, not a thing.

Sure, it was Senator McCarran that asked them to do it. But it wasn’t Senator McCarran [that said], “I told you that they made a mistake.” You see that. Done it the other way. And when I say Senator McCarran was the one that talked them into doing [it], that’s not exactly correct, either. They *offered* to do it for Senator McCarran. And I guess there is some difference.

So it was really the gamblers themselves who engineered that? It was the gamblers themselves that offered to do that thing, yeh. Because the gamblers knew they needed a champion back in Washington. Mr. [J. Edgar] Hoover, you know, he was a good deal younger than he is now. And he was really one to take after them.

I was telling about when I helped to get McCarran supporters by seeing to the naturalization of a great many aliens. That was very interesting, because Senator McCarran was interested in getting immigration legislation passed and at least had the reputation of wanting to restrict immigration; this seemed like a contradiction? Well, I think he wanted them restricted. But what he thought would make good American citizens, he would put himself out, pass numerous special bills in order to get them in. But unfortunately, in this country, a foreigner, he is a little bashful, for one thing, For another, he’s scared, afraid, and he don’t want anything to do with anything where the word “law” is used, or anything like that. And he has definitely made up his mind that there is no use for him to try to learn English because he will never be able to do it; in particular, when they get up into their early forties, in or around that age.

So if you can explain it to them, that they have schools where they can go up and learn the necessary things to become an American citizens, and also give them the encouragement

that the authorities, the Immigration Service, are more interested in the kind of a life they have led and their backgrounds. Because they are well aware of the fact, too, that a foreigner, he can't learn the American ways, from just being here a few years, or for that matter, ever. He will never get around to it, for the simple reason they live together and they talk their own language, and particularly, the women, never, see. So they come down after they find out that you are a foreigner yourself—meaning me. They will talk to you. They will tell me things that they wouldn't tell to any of the rest of them. And then you encourage them, and not only that, but you could take them right up there because we have arrangements with Immigration Service. We encourage them to go along, they attend the schools, and nine out of ten become American citizens.

But McCarran didn't want certain people into this country because he figured that they would never make good American citizens. Now, whether he was right or wrong, that I don't know. I think some of them was very good. I think that we're getting in a lot of people in this country now we would be better off without. Now, that's my own personal opinion.

Was he aware of what I was doing to help these foreigners? Yeh, because Bill Kane, that was then in charge of the Immigration Service, and I had a complete understanding. And he was well aware of the fact.

So the immigration bills were really aimed at what he considered undesirable people. Now, whether he was right, or they were those kind of people, I do not know. But one thing I do know is that for years and years, they've been trying to keep that level out. They haven't managed to do it completely, yet.

Did he talk to me about the problems? What kinds of things did he say about the problems of Communists coming in? Well, he first of all figured that there was an organized

movement of the Communist party, and in particular, when the so-called "displaced" [persons] bill was passed, where all of those European and other nations, they were supposed to have been displaced during the war. [It] was issuing an invitation, practically, to come to this country. He maintained that the Communist party would take advantage of that and infiltrate displaced persons, and with their manipulations would be the ones that will actually benefit from the displaced persons law. That was his greatest thing that he was disturbed about.

Did I notice that he became more disturbed about this after his heart attack? Well, of course, I don't know about that because I know he had quite a few heart attacks. Of course, that could be, because, you know, in that particular time, they don't allow the filibustering, too, at the same time. And there was a lot of those Eastern senators greatly opposed to it. But, you see, first of all, Senator McCarran had an ulcer, and a bad one. And then he had his heart condition with it.

Did I notice any changes in his mental attitudes or his usual dynamic approach as he became older and sicker? No, he tried to take a little bit better care of himself, but outside of that, I didn't notice anything. As you know, he died in Hawthorne at a Democratic rally. And he didn't have any intentions of going to Hawthorne in the beginning. And we were discussing it in my office a couple of days before; the rally was to be held in Hawthorne. In other words, the Democratic party was making the swing through the state, beginning at Hawthorne. And I asked him just one question. I says, "When your term is up two years from now, you'll be eighty years of age."

And he says, "That's correct."

And I says, "Do you really intend to run for Senator again?"

And he said, "Yes."

"Well," I says, "then I think we better get a little harmony in the Democratic party, and I will suggest that you go to Hawthorne with them."

"Well," he says, "you don't mean to tell me that I should go and take the whole trip through the state?"

And I says, "No. But I think that this is a good place, to pick the number one spot, and first place they appear, and then pick 'em up once again somewheres down the line when they come around."

And that's what he intended to do, and that's why he was in Hawthorne. If I [had] kept my mouth shut, he wouldn't have been in Hawthorne.

What was the matter with the Democratic party right then? Well, the Democratic party is a party that always fights. They're still doing it, and chances are they always will. It wasn't anything. A little bit of animosity to Mr. Pittman— Vail Pittman in this particular instance. Was that kind of a hangover from 1944? It's always been a hangover with that particular group.

Alan Bible is a smart boy. Alan isn't like Senator McCarran. Senator McCarran, I think, liked to fight, see [laughing]. Bible just backs himself away from it. We used to say that was the Irish in him. I remember when Bible was used to go up in Storey County, he would come to the Democratic conventions, and he would say to me (it was always in the morning, and we had our fight during the night), he says, "Pete, here I am with my two delegates" [laughing]. Bible is an awful nice fellow.

THE RENO POST OFFICE

Well, the work in the Post Office is, of course, something that you don't see anywhere else but the Post Office. Well, I think I mentioned how I was appointed as Postmaster. I was called by Senator McCarran sometime about in the later part of December and offered the Postmastership; in fact, I was told that he had just appointed me Postmaster.

And so, the then Assistant Postmaster, Dill Pierce, he contacted me and wanted to find out when I could take over the Reno, Nevada Post Office. He says, "It should be done on New Year's Eve."

Then he started to discuss something that he referred to as a "divided account." Well, a divided account didn't mean a great deal to me at that particular time. And I don't know whether you know what a divided account means. Well, that means, in the Post Office, that you gather, see—it's broken into four quarters, and your account is finished for one quarter. And if you take it over the fifth, we will say, then they've got to make one account for the five days, and then another account for the balance of the month. And the five days is

just as tough for them to make out, you see, as for the balance of the month. And that's what he wanted to eliminate. But he kept on talking so much about a divided account that I agreed that we would postpone our New Year's celebration and go down to the Post Office and take it over.

And, of course, when you do that, they send a couple of Post Office inspectors, persons. You see, we don't only have to count. We've got to count all the blank money orders and all the blank postal savings certificates as they had in those—they haven't got them now—and all the blank savings bonds, as they were handling them, and all the savings stamps, and everything they have in cash, and all the inventory, and all the equipment, and the whole shebang.

So we took over the Post Office. And the first year that I was there, we took in \$186,000. That's in round figures; I can't remember the [exact] number. Now, they're doing over four million dollars. But anyway, that's what they were doing, and the job was paying \$3,700 a year, which, of course, was pretty good money

in those days. Now, they pay \$17,000. And we had, I guess, something like sixty employees.

Post offices in those days ran themselves, practically. They had got a wage increase in 1926, which paid a substitute sixty-five cents an hour, and that's what he got as long as he was a substitute, even if that lasted four or five years, which many times it did. And then when he became a regular, he started off at \$1,700 and wound up at \$2,100. And now they go on strike because they start at \$6,300 and wind up with \$8,500. But that's beside the point. We'll get to that later.

You don't have to worry. Nobody quit. And when you put on a new man, you just bring him out and introduce him to them and get three or four fellows that work with them around there, and they break him in. You don't even know you got a new man. And things go pretty good. You can get away from there. You got a good bunch of people working there, and the subs will sit down in the swing room waiting to get a couple, three, four hours work. You don't ever have to worry about anything. And here in Reno, of course, you had a brand new Post Office building to go into.

And then, little by little, the postal receipts goes up. And that was *all* that was considered, insofar as your wages. It was based entirely on the postal receipts that you took in. And then, all of a sudden, we are in war. And then our troubles begin. And believe me, they really began then. Lots of our fellows went into the Army—Well, more so into the Navy because they could get more money in the Navy than we were paying them in the Post Office.

And help, you just couldn't get. And the system we used here in Reno was that I talked a lot of the boys that was on the windows to go back on the mailing floor and work mail, which every one of them did. I never seen so good of cooperation from a bunch of fellows as I did at that time in the Reno Post Office.

Another good thing was that this was a divorce center. And war or no war, they still come in here for divorces. And we picked them up, put them to work for six or seven weeks, or eight, and then we got ourselves a brand new crew again.

So we had a meeting [with] the postmasters from this western area. And at that time, Reno was the only one that was considered. Las Vegas was just a little bit of [a] town; it didn't amount to much. And Frank Walker was the Postmaster General. And we just had to get in. He was one of those businessmen that wanted things done as cheaply as possible. But something drastic had to be done, because we couldn't keep the employees, and the only ones we could keep was those that had fifteen, twenty years or so, or more, in the service for their retirement. That's why they stuck on. And he [Walker] says, "Well, what are we going to do?"

So I suggested that we let the employees work on Saturdays instead of letting them off like we were doing. And we agreed on that. See, that gave them one extra day's pay. But it was cheaper for the Post Office Department because for Saturday work, they actually got less than they did for a normal day— not very much, but twenty-five, thirty cents or something like that, less for the day.

And then we finally got them to give [a] ten percent [pay Raise]. Now, just think, the Post Office employees there, they didn't get a pay increase before 1945. And up to 1945 and all during the war, they worked with a ten percent increase on \$2,100 (that's \$210). So that gives them \$2,310 plus an extra day working on Saturday, which didn't cost the Department anything, you see what I mean.

And then they talk about the postal service. That was the period when the postal service started to go down. And it actually never regained its feet.

But with me getting into the Post Office, I was fairly lucky because actually, while I was president of the State Federation of Labor, the Carriers union contacted Mrs. [Lillie] Clinedinst and myself about the appointment of a new Assistant Postmaster down at the Reno Post Office. And they had a fellow by the name of Bill Pierce in mind to recommend. And we went up, told them that we would see Pat McCarran about it. And he was in town at the time. And we went up and we told him our story.

"Well," he says, "I'll call Bill Kinnikin right away and tell him that's what you want and that's what you're going to get." Now, there, you get in again about labor. That was another labor case, pure and simple.

So he called Bill Kinnikin downstairs and he told him that he wanted him to appoint Bill Pierce as Assistant Postmaster. And Bill Kinnikin told him that he had just recommended a fellow by the name of Rice, Burt Rice, for Assistant Postmaster.

And Senator McCarran told him, "The unions want Bill Pierce, and you appoint Bill Pierce. And you tell Rice that he can't." It was a hell of a thing. I didn't know before I came in there that he had actually had Rice in the office and given him the job.

But that's what we had to put up with in the war. And it was really one of the roughest things I ever come up with. And *all* of us had to work. I used to go out on the mailing floor day after day and pitch mail myself. You had to do it in order to get it out.

So the personnel question became a serious one in those days in making out all the forms, which—in government, you still make out all the forms that you can think of. We didn't have any of that. But I had a pretty good stenographer we picked up. And in order to get her to handle the personnel form, I made out a dummy copy of every appointment and

promotion or anything that could possibly be made and gave them to her, and numbered them as such; I told her what to do. "Now, you use number one or number two, whatever the case may be. All you got to do is substitute the date and the name." And it worked like a charm. But in the meantime, after the war was over, we didn't have Civil Service. We appointed them as best we could, whatever you could pick up. And you certainly didn't get the best kind of fellows.

But then in 1945, when everybody else was getting six or seven thousand dollars, by God, they increased the pay of the postal employees by four hundred dollars. And actually, it was (Arthur) Summerfield that made the first real movement toward doing something with the pay increases and so on. But, of course, it was way too late. And therefore, the Post Office Department has always been behind.

And, of course, on top of that, as the city increased, you had more and more people. Pretty soon, you are over—. I can remember the first Christmas when they had one million pieces of mail—now, hell, that don't mean anything, then you went over a million dollars in postal receipts, and pretty soon there was two million, and it was close to three million when I left there; now I think it's close to five. And they have about four hundred employees down in there. But those years was tough. And we were way up in the '50's before they started to let up a little bit.

Another thing, then, when you get those kind of people: you haven't got any you can make supervisors of; they're very scarce. And now, of course, they're beginning to pick up again. See, they can get people interested in them. But for all of those years, the postal employees didn't have a pay increase, from 1926 to 1945. And they expected you to run Post Offices paying people that kind of a

money, when you could go anyplace and get twice that amount of money.

Well, in fact, there was another thing. The old established government agencies, like the Postmaster and the Internal Revenue office and so on, was on the salaries that had been created many, many years ago. And then when they came in with the WPA and the PWA and all those new organizations, they were paying them three times as much [as] they were paying any of us. And now they are trying to pick it up.

And now something new is coming into government service. It's that you go on strike if you don't get what you can. Now where do you think that could lead this country into? Just like the other government employees. Other postal employees decide that they want more money. They know now how to do it. They just go out on strike.

But in those years that I was in, the postal service were some of the nicest people I ever worked with in my life I found in there, and the remarkable cooperation and the spirit there were amongst those employees. Naturally we had a few sour ones, too. But as an overall, we had a pretty good crew, even under those conditions, when they weren't getting [enough money]. So I spent twenty-seven pretty happy years, more or less, down in there.

I'll give you (something about) the National Association of Postmasters. For many, many years, there has been such [a] thing as the National Association of Postmasters. But when the Democrats got into office, there was only something like seven, eight hundred members. And the only ones that they wanted in the association was postmasters from the fourth- and third-class post offices. They didn't want any of the big (ones).

So, the first convention—well, I wasn't Postmaster then— was held in French Lick,

Indiana. The first convention that I attended was in 1937 in San Francisco. And when I come into the Post Office here one morning when I come to work, I see a fellow walking up and down Mill Street with a derby hat on. And you don't see too many derby hats. And pretty soon, he appeared in my office, and it was the Postmaster from Salt Lake City. And he wanted to get a charter started in this state. And I says, "Well, there must be one because I see there in the desk where there were some old applications from the National Association."

"Oh, well," he says, "they're defunct." He says, "They wish that you would take it over," which I did, and we went down.

See, the most postmasters there were in Nevada was 141; now, I think there's about 115, or something like that; all these small ones. And we had about 120 some-odd members going down, so, of course, everybody was happy. Nevada was supposed to be the last state that didn't have any.

And after a short period of time at the convention, I was put on the executive committee, and then the war broke out, and I stayed there 'til after the war. But, of course, the postmasters, you could get—in those days, even although there was only two Post Offices in the country that paid \$12,000 a year, and that was Chicago and New York, the highest you could get, like in San Francisco, was \$10,000. They had the pick of the crop. Things was still tough, you know, in those days.

But like anybody else, we would all like to be appointed politically, but we like to hold onto the jobs. And we knew that couldn't be done as a political setup, so we had to get Civil Service into [it]. And when we sprung that, there was a committee of about eight or nine met with Farley about Civil Service, he didn't want no part of it. And the first that we asked for there was no confirmation by the

Senate, although many of us were skeptical that we would ever get that, which we didn't. And that's where we compromised with giving them that particular thing.

But now, you get into—none of us really believed that if there was a change in the administration, there wouldn't be a change in postmasters. But due to the fact that the bill was passed in 1938, and there was no change in the administration to another party before '52, we have been pretty well established. And the business people kind of like it. And there haven't been too many postmasters removed for cause, that they went over pretty popular. We didn't have any trouble with it.

And, of course, the truth of the matter of it is that Civil Service looked into it. When I took the Civil Service examination down here, there was seven of us that took it. And many of those that was removed was when they took that qualifying Civil Service examination; they couldn't make it, and they went out.

But they get a better class of people, although there's something that's creeping into it. I don't know whether it's there yet. When you get a postmaster that come from the outside, nobody in the Post Office knows what he was used to do, except what they read in the paper or what they can find out. And they have to listen to them a little bit. And it seems to have a good effect for them.

But where they now take them up from the ranks, which they did after I left. But, of course, one of the reasons they did it, because I recommended them both to Bible. But you take them out of the ranks, you run into this one thing: that the clerks that used to work with him says, "Don't be so cocky. I was used to work with you when you were nothing but a clerk." But outside of that, I think it's a good thing.

And when the post office goes into the red, I don't know anything that could be done

about it. People are going to have to make up their minds whether they want to make a business organization out of it or a service organization. And if they want to run it as a business on the break even, or even making money on it, there's going to be a lot of the services that have to be discontinued. And they've already discontinued a lot. You don't get the service that you did when I first came in there, I'll tell you that. And they have made it much tougher to operate a post office now than it was then.

You take, for instance, when we had a two-trip delivery or carriers. If a carrier showed up [and] he was sick, we had ample [carriers] that we could cover him with, by knockin' out the afternoon trips on a couple of routes and let them take his mail and go out and deliver it. But now, you see, you have no leeway at all. See, if a carrier—which they do, and you can't cover them up—then you are lucky if you can just give the people, the public, part of the service.

Again, When I first came in there, the Reno Post Office didn't have a post office truck of their own. It was all rented equipment. There was four trucks which was rented from the carriers that operated them. Now, they have in the neighborhood [of] about a hundred some-odd trucks down in there.

But it's a nice place to work, and you meet an awful lot of people. You may not make too much money, but you can meet a lot of people, see, which compensates to your advantage at a later date. So, that's about all with the Post Office. And that should take care of the whole thing now.

A TERM ON THE NEVADA GAMING COMMISSION

And now we can cover that gambling [in] just a few seconds.

When it was found out that I was going to retire as Postmaster, the next day I got a telephone call from Grant Sawyer. And, of course, had known Grant Sawyer, since he was one of Pat McCarran's boys, too, and was a good personal friend of his father's. He called me, and he says, "There's a job at the gambling commission down in here I want to fill real badly. He says, "In my opinion, it's the most important commission there is in this state, because it's not alone that you have to see about the money end of it, but also that the regulations are followed, and so on and so forth. I would like very much if you will take it."

"Well," I says, "it's not a steady job, one where you have to put in every day on it?"

He says, "No, it's only whenever they are meeting."

"Well," I says, "I'll take it."

And so I put in about five years in that. So that winds up the whole thing, see. I had five government—State [and federal]—jobs and

never asked for any of them. Must've been able to fool the majority of 'em!

When you get into gambling, you get something in this state, in Nevada—I don't know whether it's good or bad. It's good to the extent [of] the amount of money it brings in. But let it someday get away from you—if they open it up to corporations and concerns where the stock is on the open market, it could be dangerous, in my opinion. But in another thing that's bad is that in this state, [we] got ourselves in a position which I don't think you can do anything about now—that a big percentage of your people, about 35,000, are working in the gambling industry. And close to fifty percent of the taxes you collect is gotten from gambling. In other words, you're getting all your eggs in one basket. And I don't know anything you can do about it now.

Would I tell about some of the cases that I saw come up, and something about the personnel in the gambling? Well, the gambling, there wasn't any particular cases while I was on it. We issued a license to the Caesar's Palace, the Castaways, the Silver

Slipper. And on license changes, when there was a change in the management of the Flamingo, Desert Inn, and so on and so forth. And, of course, it's only a matter of—they're handled about the same. There is no difference between a guy with a small shop that wanted a couple of games or with a big one, except it takes you a lot longer time to investigate. Now, take in Caesar's Palace, there was seventy some-odd partners in that one. And you got to investigate every one of them. That takes time. And the only thing that you can do is to tell them to get in their application as quickly as possible so you can start looking into them, which we did.

Well, of course, we closed up the Silver Slipper for not operating as the law provides. And, of course, the one that there was more talk about than anything was [the] Cal Neva club on account of Frank Sinatra. But actually, the Frank Sinatra case never came up before the Commission.

That Silver Slipper case was interesting; did I see those dice? Well, we seen them, yeh. And, of course, it's pretty hard for a guy, but [when] you get into that kind of business, you better be on your toes. But then, we had a lot of smaller ones, you know, different places all over.

I guess what you actually got in gambling is this: that if a fellow operates a gambling place, only got a couple of "Twenty-One" tables, he can't afford to let you win. Because if you go in and win six, seven, eight hundred dollars from him, it will take him a couple of months to make it up, if he ever makes it up, because he could have somebody else come in and win it again. So they are not going to let you win if they can help it. And that's, of course, one of the reasons why they are not letting too many licenses out for those unless their reputations are real good. Human nature, the way they are, you're not going to

let people take it out of the door if you can protect yourself by doing a little cheating.

But all my dealings with all of the various operators, and particularly those in Las Vegas—there's a great deal of difference between the operators from Las Vegas and here in Reno. And if anything, as an overall, they're far friendlier in Las Vegas than they are up in here. It's a different class of people. I never had any trouble with them. And many, many times, always, if you talk to them a little bit, [they're] tickled to death and will change their operation pretty fast. It's like anything else.

Of course, there's always "monkeys." And unfortunately, there is a lot of people—maybe not as much now; I don't think as much now as there used to be. But if we could only get a gambling license in Nevada, all we need is a scoop shovel and a wheelbarrow to haul out the money. Now then, you're getting into where we start investing thirty and forty million dollars.

CONCLUSION

As a fellow born in a foreign country and becoming an American citizen and getting positions in both state and federal government, I consider myself extremely lucky. And I can only say that this country has been good to me. And I still believe that when I went into the United States Army, [that] was the smartest thing I've ever done. And having those positions of trust and handling millions of dollars in some of them have been very satisfactory to myself. And that should take care of that.

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